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CHRIST
THE LIFE OF THE SOUL

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ABBOT MARMION, O.S.B.
Translated from the French by Dom Matthew Dillon, Monk of Glenstal Priory.

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(Dom Pius De Hemptinne)
Edited by Dom Raymund Thibaut, O.S.B.

CHRIST
THE
LIFE OF THE SOUL

SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES

BY

THE RIGHT REV. D. COLUMBA MARMION

ABBOT OF MAREDSOUS ABBEY

Translated from the French
by a Nun of Tyburn Convent

PREFACE BY H. E. CARD. MERCIER
AND BY H. E. CARD. BOURNE

WORK HONOURED WITH A LETTER OF APPROBATION
FROM HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XV

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LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XV TO THE AUTHOR

Dilecto Filio Columbae Marmion, O.S.B.
Abbati Maredsolensi.

BENEDICTUS PP. XV.

Dilecte Fili, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem.

Binos tuos illos libros, quos Nobis perhumaniter obtuleras, quorum alter "Le Christ, Vie de l'Ame", alter "Le Christ dans ses Mystères" inscribitur, cum his proximis diebus, quantum per occupationes licuit volveremus, facile cognovimus jure sane ac merito eos laudari, utpote ad excitandam alendamque in animis divinae caritatis flammam valde accommodatos. Etsi enim non hic omnia exponuntur quae in tuis ad sodales sermonibus de Jesu Christo, omnis sanctitatis et exemplari et effectore, explicaveris, his tamen eorum tamquam commentariis idonee foveri studium videtur Ejus imitandi de Ipsoque vivendi "qui factus est nobis sapientia a Deo, et justitia, et sanctificatio et redemptio".

Optimum igitur consilium fuit haec in lucem dari volumina, unde non modo sodales tui sed multo plures ad omnem virtutem proficerent: lateque jam, ut audimus, vel laicorum manibus versantur. Itaque cum gratias tibi agimus, tum etiam gratulamur: atque auspicem caelestium munerum, apostolicam benedictionem tibi, dilecte Fili, paterna cum benevolentia impertimus.

Datum Romae apud Sanctum Petrum die X mensis octobris MCMXIX, Pontificatus Nostri anno sexto.

BENEDICTUS PP. XV.

To Our beloved Son Columba Marmion, O.S.B.
Abbot of Maredsous.

BENEDICT XV, Pope.

Beloved Son, health and the Apostolic Benediction.

Having recently perused, as far as Our occupations permitted, the two books: *Christ, the Life of the Soul* and *Christ in His Mysteries,* which you have kindly sent Us, We readily appreciate their praiseworthiness as being singularly conducive to excite and maintain the flame of Divine love in the soul. For although these pages do not contain the whole of the discourses you have made to your spiritual sons concerning Jesus Christ, the Exemplar and Cause of all sanctity, nevertheless these commentaries, so to speak, on the matter of your teaching, show clearly how this doctrine is capable of fostering the desire to imitate Christ and to live by Him "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption".

It was therefore a most happy inspiration to publish these works so that not only your own spiritual children but many others should be helped in the way of perfection. We are told that these works are already in the hands of many even among the laity. Therefore thanking you, We at the same time congratulate you and, as a pledge of heavenly reward, We impart to you, beloved Son, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, near St. Peter's, October 10th, 1919, the sixth year of Our Pontificate.

BENEDICT XV, Pope.

PREFACE

These pages will do much good. They are restful for the soul. They simplify Christian life.

The chief object of the author who has received the confidences of many restless souls, embarrassed by the complications of their personal methods, is, if I am not mistaken, to enlarge these souls, to free them from their self-bondage, to facilitate for them, by rendering it more attractive, their ascension towards God. He leads them, in each of his conferences, to Him Who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life".[1]

He shows them, by turns, Divine Providence enveloping, in the same design of predestination, Christ, the Word made Man and ourselves (1st conference); then, in the lines laid down by St. Thomas of Aquinas,[2] *he describes the mediation of Christ, the Sanctifier of our souls (2nd and 3rd conferences), he shows in Him, true God and true Man, the one and universal Exempler of all holiness; the meritorious and satisfactory Cause Who has paid the price of our salvation to Divine justice, according to these words of the apostle St. Paul:* Et consummatus, factus est omnibus obtemperantibus sibi causa salutis aeternae, appellatus a Deo pontifex juxta ordinem Melchisedech. *Through the consummation of His mediatorial work, Christ has become, for all who submit to His teaching, the cause of eternal salvation. So He was "called by God a high priest according to the order of Melchisedech";*[3] *and lastly, the realiser, the efficient Cause of our holiness, for, always following the doctrine of the apostle St. Paul whom the author is never tired of quoting: We have our divine origin in Christ: God has willed He should be "made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption",* Ex ipso autem vos estis in Christo Jesu, qui factus est nobis sapientia a Deo et justitia et santificatio et redemptio.[4]

The office of Christ being thus shown under all its aspects, the Benedictine theologian next considers the realization of the Divine plan in souls: Christ forms His mystical body, the visible and invisible Church; but the Holy Ghost formed Christ—at least it is so expressed by theology in its language of "appropriation"—and, as the "Spirit of Jesus", He consummates the work of our sanctification (5th & 6th conferences).

[1] Joan xiv, 6. [2] *Summa theol.* iii, q. 24, a. 3. [3] Hebr. v, 9. [4] I Cor. 1, 30.

Thus is completed the picture of the work of Christ conceived eternally in the designs of the Heavenly Father and realized by Christ the Mediator and by His sanctifying Spirit.

Christ is the centre of the plan and of the work of God: as Man-God He sums up all: Tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, Jesu Christe.

The Blessed Albert the Great, the master of St. Thomas of Aquinas, in that susbtantial and delightful opuscule entitled: De adhaerendo Deo *" Of the adherence of the soul to God", invites us to enter into Christ, from man to God, to pass through the open Wounds of the suffering and dying Humanity of Christ so as to penetrate into the secrets of His Divinity:* Nec aliud, unquam, objectum quis mente attendat quam solum Jesum Christum vulneratum, sicque per eum in eum, id est, per hominem in Deum, per vulnera humanitatis ad intima divinitatis suae sedulo et obnixe intendat.[5]

All the substance of the spirtuality of the Gospel lies in this formula. Hence the Right Reverend Abbot Columba says wisely: " For certain souls, the life of Christ Jesus is one subject of meditation among many others; this is not enough. Christ is not one of the means of the spiritual life; He is all our spiritual life" (p. 74).

The second part of the volume is consecrated to showing forth the work of the soul that wills to receive abundantly the Divine life of which Christ is the source.

Faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ constitutes the first step towards this life; baptism, the first of all the sacraments, renders the one on whom it is conferred, a disciple of Christ. The work of baptism is double, although simultaneous: it takes away sin, the germ of death, and gives grace, the source of life. By this sacrament of adoption and initiation, the Christian becomes a partaker of the death and glorious life of his Divine Head. These two aspects of spiritual life, so clearly pointed out by St. Paul, ought to envelop the whole existence of every Christian.

The author next shows in detail how we " die to sin" and how we " live for God". He develops the laws to which the practice and growth of this life for God are subject, and the sources whence it is especially nourished: the Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament; prayer, whether it be the prayer of the Church in her liturgy " which makes us one with Christ", or mental prayer, " the blossoming of the gifts of the Holy Ghost". The love of a soul for Christ will necessarily overflow on all who compose the mystical body of Christ; and in the first place ranks the Virgin Mary who, by her Divine Maternity, enters into the very essence of the mystery of the Incarnation. The last conference shows

[5] B. Alberti Magni. *De adhaerendo Deo*, cap. 2.

how "the fulness of the mystical body of Christ" is only attained in the beatitude of eternal life; that is the final term of our predestination, the consummation of our adoption in Christ Jesus.

Thus end these conferences which place the mystery of Jesus in high relief. They refer everything to Christ the source of all grace, of all life, of all holiness. This, leading idea, full of signifiance, makes the unity of the work as well as its strength.

The table of contents marks out with much clearness the continuity of this idea in its different stages and renders it superfluous for us to attempt here any detailed exposition. Besides this book is not one to be subjected to a dry analysis. It must be read and meditated with the heart as well as with the head, as it was with all his apostolic soul that the author delivered the conferences of which the book is composed.

There are perhaps some souls who will wonder at this simplification of spirituality; they cannot accustom themselves to the idea that it is not necessary to seek difficulties where none exist, in order to arrive at perfection.

However, it is Christ and His Gospel that are right. And is it not written in the Gospel: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven?" And did not our Divine Jesus say in a moment of holy exultation—Exsultavit Spiritu Sancto—"*I confess to Thee, O Father . . . because Thou hast hidden these things from (those the world esteems) the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones?"*

The perfume of Holy Scripture, to be breathed in at each page of this volume, gives the impression that it was conceived and prepared during prayer, at the foot of the altar, before being given to the public.

Souls desirous of living the inner life will gratefully welcome this work. The religious communities above all, to whom these conferences were preached, will recall the communicative accents they heard whilst listening to the solid and clear doctrine now left to them as a guide, and they will ask the Holy Spirit, as we do, to grant this inspiring book, Christ, the Life of the Soul, *the full success it merits.*

D. J. Card. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Mechlin.

PREFACE

"Le Christ, Vie de l'Ame", *has received in its original forms such ample commendation both from our Holy Father the Pope and from the learned and much venerated Cardinal Archbishop of Malines that any further praise seems almost out of place. Yet very willingly indeed I add my less authoritative tribute to the more important words that they have written, and I very gladly advise all those who seek in the English language a work that will surely help and guide them on the path of closer union with their Maker, to read and study this translation of the extremely valuable treatise which is the outcome of long thought and labour on the part of the Abbot of Maredsous. Those who have been privileged to make retreats under his guidance will know what to expect from his pen, and they will not suffer disappointment. And by his written work and its translation into English his teaching will receive a far wider and more permanent diffusion.*

Such solid teaching is much needed at the present time. The number of souls seeking more intimate union with God is rapidly increasing. But many are held back by the want of simplicity, the discouraging complexity, and the exaggerated refinement and multiplication of detail, which have lessened the value of so many modern spiritual books. The main object of striving has been obscured by too great insistence on the methods of attaining, and the freedom of the soul under the guidance of the Holy Ghost has been impaired. Abbot Marmion carries us back to a wider and more wholesome tradition, and many will rise up to bless him, as they find in his teaching new strength, and fresh vigour in their striving after God.

To the Clergy both in the world and in the cloister, to the religious communties of women, active as well as contemplative, and to the devout laity I very earnestly commend this book.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE.
Archbishop of Westminster.

Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel.

FOREWORD

These conferences were not composed with a view to publication. In fact few, if any of them, were committed to writing before delivery. They comprise instructions and meditations giving during retreats, or to my Community, and are the fruit of reflection and prayer more than of study. Some of those who assisted at these discourses noted down the thoughts which struck them more especially, and begged me to allow them to be published.

It was a difficult task to put these notes together, and above all to preserve what was original and personal in them.

It would seem to me, however, that the member of our Community to whom this work was entrusted has taken infinite pains to respect the text, while reproducing the original as far as possible, and indeed he has succeeded beyond what I could have hoped for.

My object in these, as in all my other instructions, is to fix the eyes and the hearts of my readers on Jesus Christ and on His word. He is the Alpha and Omega of all sanctity and His word is the divine seed, from which all sanctity springs. In the first ages of the Church these two divine principles, untrammelled in their action, produced wonders of sanctity, but, little by little, men, not content with the simplicity of the divine message, mingled their own conceptions with those of God.

I felt convinced that if I could deliver God's message in His own words, according to the divine simplicity of His plan, these same effects would follow, and I must say that my hopes have not been disappointed. For this reason I consented to have these conferences translated into English, hoping that, as the French text has reached the 15th edition in four years [the original work attains now his 50th thousand], they may have the same success in English-speaking countries as in other lands.

The translation has been made by a well known English writer, a Nun of Tyburn Convent, and it appears to me that it preserves the fundamental thoughts of the original with great fidelity, while reproducing to a great extent what is personal in the form.

† Columba Marmion, Abb.
Abbey of Maredsous.

Feast of S. Maurus,
January 15th 1922

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

A little more than a year after the above lines were written, Abbot Columba Marmion passed to his reward. The call came to close his active work on earth and found him ready. On the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul whose zeal he had imitated and whose doctrine he had preached, Abbot Marmion offered the Holy Sacrifice for the last time. Most truly could he, who had been characterized by such child-like simplicity and confidence in God, apply to himself the words of that Mass: *Scio cui credidi, et certus sum, quia potens est depositum meum servare in illum diem justus judex.*

The life and words of this learned theologian and skilled director of souls will long continue to bear fruit, and his memory will always be held in love and veneration by many who attracted by his ever fatherly kindness were led by him straight to the Heart of God.

March 21st 1925.

INDEX OF CONFERENCES

I. THE DIVINE ECONOMY

I. The Divine Plan of our Adoptive Predestination in Jesus Christ 21
II. Christ, the only Model of all Perfection. *Causa Exemplaris* 42
III. Christ, the Author of our Redemption and Infinite Treasury of Grace. *Causa satisfactoria et meritoria* . . 58
IV. Christ, the efficient Cause of all Grace. *Causa efficiens* . 74
V. The Church, the Mystical Body of Christ . . . 92
VI. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus 104

II. FOUNDATION AND DOUBLE ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

I. Faith in Jesus Christ, the Foundation of Christian Life . 131
II. Baptism, the Sacrament of Adoption and Initiation: Death and Life 151

A. DEATH TO SIN

III. *Delicta quis intelligit?* 165
IV. The Sacrament and the Virtue of Penance . . . 181

B. LIFE FOR GOD

V. The Truth in Charity 203
VI. Our Supernatural Growth in Christ 216
VII. The Eucharistic Sacrifice 241
VIII. *Panis vitae* 260
IX. *Vox Sponsae* 283
X. Prayer 300
XI. "Love one another" 323
XII. The Mother of the Incarnate Word 338
XIII. *Coheredes Christi* 356

CHRISTUM COMITAMUR, CHRISTUM SEQUIMUR, CHRISTUM HABEMUS ITINERIS DUCEM, LUCIS PRINCIPEM, SALUTIS AUCTOREM, CAELUM PARITER ET PATREM QUAERENTIBUS ET CREDENTIBUS POLLICENTEM. QUOD EST CHRISTUS ERIMUS, CHRISTIANI, SI CHRISTUM FUERIMUS IMITATI.

IT IS WITH CHRIST THAT WE JOURNEY, AND WE WALK WITH OUR STEPS IN HIS FOOTPRINTS: HE IT IS WHO IS OUR GUIDE AND THE BURNING FLAME WHICH ILLUMINES OUR PATHS; PIONEER OF SALVATION, HE IT IS WHO DRAWS US TOWARDS HEAVEN, TOWARDS THE FATHER, AND PROMISES SUCCESS TO THOSE WHO SEEK IN FAITH. WE SHALL ONE DAY BE THAT WHICH HE IS IN GLORY, IF BY FAITHFUL IMITATION OF HIS EXAMPLE, WE BECOME TRUE CHRISTIANS, OTHER CHRISTS.

(St. Cyprian, *De idolorum vanitate*, C. 15.)

I

The Economy of the Divine Designs

I. THE DIVINE PLAN OF OUR ADOPTIVE PREDESTINATION IN JESUS CHRIST

SUMMARY. Importance, for the spiritual life, of the knowledge of the Divine Plan. I. *General idea* of this plan: the holiness to which God calls us by supernatural adoption, is a participation in the Divine life brought to us by Jesus Christ. II. *God wills* to make us share in His own life so as to *make us holy* and fill us with beatitude; what *holiness* is, in God. III. Holiness *in the Trinity*; fulness of the life to which God destines us. IV. Fulfilment of this decree through *Divine adoption* by means *of grace: supernatural* character of spiritual life. V. The Divine Plan, crossed by sin, re-established by *the Incarnation*. VI. *Universality* of the Divine adoption; the *ineffable love* it manifests. VII. Primordial *aim* of the Divine plan: *the glory of Jesus Christ and of His Father*, in the unity of their Spirit.

GOD chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity. Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the purpose of His Will: unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He hath graced us in His beloved Son."[1]

These are the terms in which the Divine plan is set forth by the Apostle St. Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven, and was chosen by God to bring to light, as he himself says, the economy of the mystery which hath been hidden from all eternity in God. We see the great Apostle labouring unceasingly to make known this eternal plan, established by God Himself for the sanctification of our souls. Why do all the efforts of the Apostle tend, as he carefully points out, to bring to light this Divine dispensation?[2]

Because God, Who is the Author of our salvation, and the first source of our sanctity, could alone make known to us what He desires of us in order that we may attain to Him.

[1] Ephes. i, 4-6.

[2] *Mihi data est gratia hæc . . . illuminare omnes, quæ sit dispensatio sacramenti absconditi a sæculis in Deo.* Ephes. iii, 8-9.

Among the souls who seek God, some hardly succeed in reaching Him.

Some have no precise idea of what holiness is; being ignorant of the plan traced out by Eternal Wisdom, or setting it aside, they make holiness consist in such or such a conception formed by their own intelligence, they only wish to be guided by themselves; attached to those purely human ideas they have framed, they go astray; if they make great strides, it is outside the true way marked out by God; they are the victims of those illusions against which St. Paul warned the first Christians.[3]

Others have clear notions on points of detail, but lack a view of the whole; losing themselves in these *minutiae*, and not having any synthetic view, they are always going over the same ground; their life becomes a real labour, subject to incessant difficulties, without zest, without expansion, and often without much result, because these souls attach too much importance to their acts, or give them less value than they should relatively have.

It is therefore extremely important, as St. Paul says, to run in the race, "not as at an uncertainty", as one beating the air,[4] but so as to obtain the prize: *Sic currite ut comprehendatis;*[5] to know as perfectly as possible the Divine idea of holiness; to examine with the greatest care, so as to adapt ourselves to it, the plan traced out by God Himself, whereby we may attain to Him: it is only at this price that our salvation and sanctification can be realized.

In so grave a matter, in so vital a question, we must look at and weigh things, as God looks at and weighs them. God judges all things in the light, and His judgment is the test of all truth. "We must not judge things according to our own liking," says St. Francis of Sales, "but according to that of God; this is the great secret. If we are holy according to our own will, we shall never be truly holy, we must be so according to God's Will."[6] Divine Wisdom is infinitely above human wisdom; God's thoughts contain possibilities of fruitfulness such as no created thought possesses. That is why God's plan is so wise that it cannot fail to reach its end because of any intrinsic insufficiency, but only through our own fault. If we leave the Divine idea full freedom to operate in us, if we adapt ourselves to it with love and fidelity, it becomes extremely fruitful and may lead us to the most sublime sanctity.

Let us contemplate in the light of Revelation God's plan for us. This contemplation will be a source of light, strength and joy for our souls.

[3] Col. ii, 8. [4] I Cor. ix, 26. [5] Ibid. 24.
[6] *Letter to the wife of President Brulart,* Sept. 15th, 1606.

I am going to give you, first of all, a general idea of the Divine plan; we will then study it in detail, following the words of St. Paul quoted at the beginning of this conference.

I

It can be demonstrated by human reason that there exists a Supreme Being, the First Cause of every creature, the Providence of the world, the Sovereign Rewarder and the Last End of all things. From this rational knowledge and from the relations it manifests between creatures and God, proceed for us certain duties towards God and towards our neighbour, duties which form what is called the natural law, and the observance of which constitutes natural religion.

But our reason, powerful though it is, has been unable to discover anything, with certainty, of the intimate life of the Supreme Being: the Divine life appears to natural reason to be infinitely distant, far off in solitude: *Lucem inhabitat inaccessibilem.*[7]

Revelation has come to us, bringing its light.

It teaches us that there is an ineffable paternity in God. God is a Father: that is the fundamental dogma which all the others suppose, a magnificent dogma which leaves the reason confounded, but ravishes faith with delight and transports holy souls.

God is a Father. Eternally, long before the created light rose upon the world, God begets a Son to Whom He communicates His Nature, His perfections, His beatitude, His life, for to beget is to communicate[8] being and life: *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te*[9]*; ex utero ante luciferum genui te.*[10] In God then is life, life communicated by the Father and received by the Son. This Son, like in all things to the Father, is the only Son of God: *Unigenitus Dei Filius.*[11] He is so because He has,[12] with the Father, one same and indivisible Divine Nature, and both, although distinct from one another (on account of their personal properties "of being Father" and "of being Son"), are united in a powerful, substantial embrace of love, whence proceeds that Third Person, Whom Revelation calls by a mysterious name: the Holy Ghost.

Such is, as far as faith can know it, the secret of the inmost life of God; the fulness and the fruitfulness of this life are the source of the

[7] I Tim. vi, 16. [8] By the gift of a similar nature. [9] Ps. ii, 7. Hebr. i, 5; v, 5.
[10] Ibid. cix, 3. [11] *Unigenitus Dei Filius qui est in sinu Patris.*
[12] Strictly speaking, we should say that He *is* with the Father and the Holy Ghost one same Divine Nature. Creatures can only lisp when they speak of such mysteries.

incommensurable bliss that the ineffable society of the three Divine Persons possesses.

And now God—not in order to add to His plenitude, but by it to enrich other beings—extends, as it were, His Paternity. God decrees to call creatures to share this Divine life, so transcendent that God alone has the right to live it, this eternal life communicated by the Father to the Only Son, and by them to the Holy Spirit. In a transport of love which has its source in the fulness of Being and Good that God is, this life overflows from the bosom of the Divinity to reach and beatify beings drawn out of nothingness, by lifting them above their nature. To these mere creatures God will give the condition and sweet name of children. By nature God has only one Son; by love, He wills to have an innumerable multitude: that is *the grace of supernatural adoption.*

Realized in Adam from the dawn of creation, then crossed by the sin of the first of human kind, who drew after him into disgrace all his race, this decree of love is to be restored by a marvellous invention of justice and mercy, of wisdom and goodness. The Son of God, Who dwells eternally in the Bosom of the Father, unites Himself in time, to a human nature, but in so close a manner that this nature, while being perfect in itself, belongs entirely to the Divine Person to Whom it is united. The Divine life, communicated in its fulness to this humanity makes it the very humanity of the Son of God: that is the wonderful work of the *Incarnation.* It is true to say of this Man Who is called Jesus, the Christ, that He is God's own Son.

But this Son, Who by nature is the only Son of the Eternal Father, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, appears here below only to become the First-born of all who shall receive Him, after having been redeemed by Him: *Primogenitus in multis fratribus.*[13] Alone born of the Father in eternal splendour, alone Son by right, He is constituted the head of a multitude of brethren, on whom, by His redeeming work, He will bestow the grace of Divine life.

So that the same Divine life which proceeds from the Father into the Son and from the Son into the humanity of Jesus, will circulate, through Christ in all who will accept it; it will draw them even into the Bosom of the Father, where Christ has gone before us,[14] after having paid, with His Blood, the price of this divine gift.

Hence all holiness is to consist in this: to receive the Divine life from Christ and by Christ, Who possesses its fulness and Who has been con-

[13] Rom. viii, 29.

[14] *Ascendo ad Patrem meum et Patrem vestrum. . . . In domo Patris mei mansiones multæ sunt. . . . Vado parare vobis locum.* Joan. xiv, 2; xx, 17.

stituted the One Mediator; to keep this Divine life and increase it unceasingly by an ever more perfect adhesion, an ever closer union with Him Who is its source.

Holiness then, is a *mystery of Divine life communicated and received*: communicated in God, from the Father to the Son by an ineffable generation;[15] communicated by the Son to humanity, which He personally unites to Himself in the Incarnation; then restored to souls by this humanity, and received by each of them in the measure of their special predestination: *secundum mensuram donationis Christi*,[16] so that Christ is truly the life of the soul because He is the source and giver of life.

Communication of this life will be made to men within the Church until the day fixed by the eternal decrees for the achievement of the Divine work upon earth. On that day, the number of the children of God, of the brethren of Jesus, will have reached its perfection. Presented by Christ to His Father,[17] the innumerable multitude of these predestined souls will surround the throne of God, to draw an endless beatitude from the fountains of life, and to exalt the splendours of the Divine goodness and glory. Union with God will be eternally consummated, and "God will be all in all".

Such is the Divine Plan in its general outline.

When, in prayer, we consider this liberality and these advances towards us on the part of God, we feel the need of prostrating ourselves in adoration, and of singing a song of thanksgiving to the praise of the Infinite Being Who stoops towards us to give us the name of children. "O Lord, how great are Thy works; Thy thoughts are exceeding deep!" *Nimis profundae factae sunt cogitationes tuae.* "Thou hast multiplied Thy wonderful works, O Lord, my God; in Thy thoughts there is no one like to Thee."[18] "In the works of Thy hands I shall rejoice."[19] "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.[20] Let my mouth be filled with praise that I may sing Thy glory!" *Repleatur os meum laude ut cantem tibi gloriam tuam.*[21]

II

Let us now resume our exposition in detail, being guided by the text of the Apostle. This exposition will inevitably lead to some repetition,

[15] Isa. liii, 8. [16] Ephes. iv, 7. [17] I Cor. xv, 24-28. [18] Ps. xxxix, 6.
[19] Ibid. xci, 5. [20] Ps. ciii, 32. [21] Ibid. lxx, 8.

but I have confidence that your charity will bear with it on account of the importance of such vital questions.

We cannot sufficiently appreciate the greatness of these dogmas and their profit to our souls unless we contemplate them at some length.

In every science, there are, as you know, first principles, fundamental points which must first be grasped, because on them all the ulterior developments and final conclusions depend.

These first elements have to be gone into so much the more deeply and require so much the more attention in as far as their consequences are the more important and extended. Our minds, it is true, are so made, that they are easily wearied in the analysis or meditation of fundamental notions. All initiation in a science, such as mathematics, in an art, such as music, in a doctrine, such as that of the inner life, requires an attention from which the mind is prone to wander. In its impatience, it wishes to hasten to the development to admire its sequence, and to the applications in order to gather and taste the fruits. But it is greatly to be feared that if the mind does not carefully fathom the principles, it will lack solidity in the conclusions that it will afterwards draw from them, however brilliant these may appear to be.

Gods wills us to be saints: that is His eternal Will; it is for that He has chosen us: *Elegit nos. . . . Ut essemus sancti et immaculati in conspectu ejus.*[22] "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." St. Paul says again: *Haec est voluntas Dei sanctificatio vesira.*[23]

God desires, with an infinite will, that we should be holy; He wills it because He is Himself holy;[24] because it is in this holiness that He has placed the glory He expects from us,[25] and the joy with which He desires to satisfy us.[26]

But what is "being holy"? We are creatures, our holiness only consists in a participation in God's holiness; to understand what it is, we must then consider what sanctity is in God. He alone is holy by essence, or rather, He is holiness itself.

Holiness is the Divine perfection which is the object of the eternal contemplation of the Angels. Open the Scriptures. You will see that twice only, the gates of Heaven were partly opened, in the sight of two great prophets, the one of the Ancient alliance, the other of the New, Isaias and St. John. What did they see? What did they hear? Both saw God in His glory, both saw the angelic choir surrounding His throne, both heard them ceaselessly praising, not the beauty of God, nor His mercy, nor His justice, nor His greatness, but His holiness:

[22] Ephes. i, 4. [23] I Thess. iv, 3. [24] Levit. xi, 44; I Petr. i, 16.
[25] Joan. xv, 8. [26] Ibid. xvi, 22.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus exercituum; plena est omnis terra gloria ejus.[27]

Now in what does holiness in God consist?

In God, all is simple; His perfections are, in Him, really identical with Himself; besides, the notion of sanctity can only be applied to Him in an absolutely transcendent manner; we have no term which can adequately render the reality of this Divine perfection. However, it is permitted us to employ a human language. What then, is holiness in God?

According to our manner of speaking, it seems to us that it is composed of a double element: first, infinite distance from all that is imperfection, from all that is created, from all that is not God Himself.

This is only a "negative" aspect. There is another element which consists in this: that *God adheres, by an immutable and always present act of His will, to the Infinite Good which is Himself*, in order to conform Himself entirely to all that this Infinite Good is. God knows Himself perfectly. His All-Wisdom shows Him His own essence as the supreme norm of all activity. God cannot will, do, or approve anything which is not ruled by His supreme wisdom, according to this ultimate norm of all good, which is the Divine essence.

This immutable adhesion, this supreme conformity of the Divine Will to the infinite Essence considered as the ultimate norm of activity could not be more *perfect*, because in God the will is really identical with the essence.

Divine holiness is, therefore, the most perfect love and the supremely unchanging fidelity with which God loves Himself infinitely.[28] And as His supreme Wisdom shows God that He is the All-Perfect, the only necessary Being, it causes Him to refer all to Himself and His own glory. That is why Sacred Scripture grants us to hear the angels' song: "Holy, holy, holy . . . Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory." It is as if the Angels said: "Thou art the All-Holy, O God, Thou art Very Holiness, because with Sovereign Wisdom, Thou dost glorify Thyself worthily and perfectly."

Hence the Divine holiness serves as the first foundation, the universal exemplar and the one source of all created holiness. You understand that, necessarily loving Himself with infinite perfection, God also necessarily wills that every creature should exist for the manifestation of His glory,[29] and that, remaining in the rank of creature, it should only act conformably to the relations of dependence and of end that the Eternal Wisdom finds in the Divine Essence.

[27] Isa. vi, 3; Apoc. iv, 8.
[28] Cf. D. L. Janssens. *Praelectiones de Deo Uno*, t. ii, p. 238, and 366. sq.
[29] See p. 22, 6 n.

Our holiness will be the higher according as there is in us more loving dependence on God and conformity of our free will to our ultimate end (which is the manifestation of the Divine Glory). The more *we adhere to God* by detaching ourselves from all that is not God, the more this dependence, conformity, adhesion, and detachment are *firm and stable*.[30]

III

Human reason can arrive at establishing the existence of this holiness in the Supreme Being, holiness which is an attribute, a perfection of the Divine nature considered in itself.

But Revelation brings us a new light.

Here we must reverently raise the eyes of our soul even to the sanctuary of the Adorable Trinity, we must hear what Jesus Christ, both to nourish our piety and to exercise our faith, has Himself willed to reveal to us, or to teach us through His Church, about the intimate life of God.

There are, as you know, Three Divine Persons in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three distinct Persons, but all three having one and the same Nature or Divine Essence. Being infinite Intelligence, the Father perfectly knows His perfections, He expresses this knowledge in One Word, the living, substantial Word, the adequate expression of what the Father is. In uttering this Word, the Father begets the Son, to Whom He communicates all His Essence, His Nature, His Perfections, His Life: *Sicut Pater habet vitam in semetipso, sic dedit et Filio habere vitam in semetipso*.[31] The Son also belongs entirely to His Father, is entirely given up to Him by a total donation which pertains to His nature as Son. And from this mutual donation of one and the same love, proceeds, as from one principle, the Holy Spirit Who seals the union of the Father and the Son by being Their substantial and living Love.

This mutual communication of the three Persons, this infinite loving union between themselves assuredly constitutes a new revelation of holiness in God: it is the ineffable union of God with Himself in the unity of His Nature and the Trinity of Persons.[32]

[30] St. Thomas (II-II, q. lxxxi, a. 5, c.) states as the elements of holiness in us, *purity* (avoidance of all sin and all imperfection, detachment from all created things) and *stability* in adhering to God; to these two elements correspond, in God, the *All-Perfection* of His Infinitely *transcendent* Being, and the *immutability* of His Will in adhering to Himself.

[31] Joan. v, 26.

[32] Let us here state, for the sake of those more initiated in theological questions that each Person of the Trinity is *identical with the Divine Essence*, and consequently is

God finds all His essential beatitude in this inexpressibly unique and fruitful life. To exist, God has only need of Himself and all His infinite perfections; finding all felicity in the perfections of His nature, and in the ineffable society of His Persons, He has no need of any creature; He refers to Himself, in Himself, in His Trinity, the glory which springs from His infinite perfections.

God has decreed, as you know, to make us enter into participation of this intimate life proper to Himself alone; He wills to communicate to us this infinite, endless beatitude, which has its source in the fulness of the Infinite Being.

Therefore—and this is the first point of St. Paul's exposition of the Divine Plan—our holiness is to consist in *adhering to God, known and loved*, not only as the Author of creation, *but as He knows and loves Himself* in the bliss of His Trinity; this is to be united to God to the point of sharing His intimate life. We shall soon see in what a marvellous manner God realizes His design. Let us for a moment consider the greatness of the gift He makes us. We shall get some idea of it if we look at what takes place in the natural order.

Look at minerals; they do not live; there is no interior principle in them as source of activity, they possess a participation in being, with certain properties, but their mode of being is very inferior. Then there is the vegetable kingdom; plants grow and live in accordance with fixed laws, and progress towards the perfection of their being, but this life is at the bottom of the scale, for the plant is destitute of knowledge. Although superior to that of plants, the life of animals is yet limited to sensibility and the necessities of the instinct. With man we rise to a higher sphere: reason and free-will characterize the life proper to a human being; but man is also matter. Above him is the angel, a pure spirit, whose life reaches the highest degree in the scale of creation. Infinitely surpassing all these created lives received in participation, is the Divine life, life uncreated, fully autonomous and independent,

holy, with a substantial holiness, because each only acts conformably to this Essence considered as the supreme norm of life and activity. It may be added that the Persons are holy because each of Them gives Himself to and belongs to the Other in an act of infinite adhesion. Lastly, the Third Person is especially called holy, because He proceeds from the Two Others *through love;* love is the principal act by which the will tends towards its end and is united to it; it designates the most eminent act of adhesion to the norm of all goodness, that is to say, of holiness, and therefore the Spirit, Who, in God, proceeds through love, bears pre-eminently the name of *holy*. This is the text of St. Thomas who exposes this beautiful and profound doctrine to us. *Cum bonum amatum habeat rationem finis, ex fine autem motus voluntarius bonus vel malus redditur, necesse est quod amor quo ipsum bonum amatur, quod Deus est, eminentem quamdam obtineat bonitatem,* QUAE NOMINE SANCTITATIS EXPRIMITUR . . . *Igitur Spiritus quo nobis insinuatur amor quo Deus se amat, Spiritus Sanctus nominatur. Opuscula selecta,* t. III, c. xlvii. It is to be seen from all this that we gain a more profound conception of Divine sanctity by considering the Trinity of Persons.

above the strength of any creature, a necessary life, subsistent in itself. God being unlimited intelligence, apprehends, by an eternal act, both the infinite and every being of which the prototype is found in Him. Being the Sovereign Will, He attaches Himself in the fulness of His strength to the Supreme Good which is none other than Himself. In this Divine life in which is all plenitude, is found the source of all perfection and the principle of all bliss.

It is this life which God wills to communicate to us; it is a share in this life which forms our holiness. And as, for us, there are degrees in this participation, the more this participation is extended, the higher will be our holiness.

And let us never forget that it is only out of love that God has resolved, *proposuit sibi Deus*, to give Himself thus. The ineffable communications of the Divine Persons with each other are all that is necessary in God.[33] These mutual relations belong to the very Essence of God; it is the life of God. All other communications that God makes of Himself are the outcome of a love supremely free. But as this love is divine, the gift of it makes us so likewise. God loves divinely; He gives *Himself*. We are called to receive this Divine communication in an ineffable measure. God intends to give Himself to us, not only as supreme beauty, to be the object of our contemplation, but to unite Himself to us so as to make Himself, as far as possible, one with us. Holy Father, said Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, let My disciples be one in Us, as Thou and I are one, so that they may find in this union the endless joy of Our own beatitude. *Ut habeant gaudium meum impletum in semetipsis.*[34]

IV

How does God fulfil this magnificent design by which He wills us to have a part in this life which exceeds the capacities of our nature and surpasses its rights and proper energies, which none of its exigences require, but which, without destroying this nature, fill it with bliss unimagined by the human heart? How will God cause us to enter into the ineffable "fellowship"[35] of His Divine life so that we may partake of eternal beatitude? By adopting us as His children.

With a Will infinitely free, but full of love: *Secundum propositum*

[33] Necessary in this sense that it is impossible for them not to be. Cf. St. Thomas I, q. xli, a. 2 ad. 5.
[34] Joan. xvii, 11, 13; cf. xv, 11.
[35] I Joan. i, 3.

voluntatis suae,[36] God has predestined us to be not only creatures, but His children: *Praedestinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum*,[37] thus to share in His Divine Nature: *Divinae consortes naturae*.[38] God adopts us as His children. What does St. Paul mean by this.

What is human adoption?

It is the admission of a stranger into a family. By adoption the stranger becomes a member of the family, he takes the name and receives the titles of this family, he has the right to inherit its possessions. It is necessary for the one who is adopted to be of the same race as the one who adopts. To be adopted by man, it is necessary to be a member of the human race. Now we, who are not of the race of God, who are poor creatures, by nature further from Him than the animal is from man, we who are infinitely distant from God, *hospites et advenae*,[39] how can we be adopted by Him?

Here is a marvel of the Divine Wisdom, power, and goodness. God gives us a mysterious share in His Nature which we call "grace": *Efficiamini divinae consortes naturae*.[40]

Grace is an *interior quality*, produced in us by God, inherent to the soul, adorning it and making it pleasing to God, just as in the natural domain, beauty and strength are qualities of the body, genius and science are qualities of the mind, loyalty and courage are qualities of the heart.

According to St. Thomas, this grace is a "participated similitude" of the Divine nature. *Participata similitudo divinae naturae*.[41] Grace makes us sharers in the nature of God in a way we cannot fathom. We are raised above our nature by grace; we become, in some manner, gods. We do not become equal, but like to God; that is why Our Lord said to the Jews: "Is it not written in your law: I said: you are gods?" *Nonne scriptum est in lege vestra: quia ego dixi: Dii estis?*[42]

For us, participation in this Divine life is brought about by grace, in virtue of which our soul becomes capable of knowing God as God knows Himself, of loving God as God loves Himself, of enjoying God as He is filled with His own beatitude, and thus living the life of God Himself.

Such is the ineffable mystery of our Divine adoption. But there is

[36] Ephes. i, 5. [37] Ibid. i, 5. [38] II Petr. i, 4. [39] Ephes. ii, 10.

[40] II Petr. i, 4. St. Peter does not say that we become participants of the Divine *Essence*, but of the Divine nature, that is to say, of that activity which constitutes the life of God, and consists in the knowledge and the fruitful, beatifying love of the Divine Persons.

[41] St. Thom. III, q. lxii, a. 1. This is why it is said in theology that grace is *deiform*, in order to denote the Divine resemblance it produces in us.

[42] Joan. x, 34.

a profound difference between Divine and human adoption. The latter is only exterior, fictitious. Certainly, it is established by a legal document, but it does not penetrate the nature of the one who is adopted. On the contrary, in adopting us, in giving us grace, God penetrates to the depths of our nature; without changing what is essential to the order of this nature, He raises it by this grace to the point of making us truly children of God. This act of adoption has so much efficacy that we really become, through grace, partakers of the Divine nature. And as participation in the Divine life constitutes our holiness, this grace is called *sanctifying*.

The consequence of this Divine decree of our adoption, of this loving predestination by which God wills to make us His children, is to give a special character to our holiness.

This character is that our holiness is *supernatural*.

The life to which God raises us is supernatural, that is to say, exceeding the capacities, the strength and the exigences of our nature. Hence, it is no more as simple human creatures that we must be holy, but *as children of God, by acts animated and inspired by grace*.

Grace becomes the principle of the Divine life in us. What is it *to live*? For us, to live is to move in virtue of an interior principle, the source of actions which tend to the perfection of our being. Another life is engrafted, so to speak, upon our natural life, a life of which grace is the principle; grace becomes in us the source of actions and operations which are supernatural, and tend towards a Divine end, namely, one day to possess God, to rejoice in Him, as He knows Himself and rejoices in His perfections.

This point is of capital importance. God might have been content to accept from us the homage of a natural religion; it would have been the source of a human, natural morality, of a union with God conformable to our nature as reasonable beings, founded upon our relations as creatures with our Creator, and our relations with our kind.

But God did not wish to limit Himself to this natural religion. We have all met with men who were not baptized, but who were, however, straightforward, loyal, upright, equitable, just and compassionate, but that can only be a natural goodness.[43] Without rejecting this (on the contrary), God is not content with it. Because He has decided to make us share in His infinite life, in His own beatitude—which is for us a supernatural end—because He has given us His grace, God demands that our union with Him should be a supernatural union, a holiness which has His grace for principle.

[43] It is however necessary to add, that on account of the evil tendencies resulting from original sin, this purely natural goodness is rarely perfect.

Apart from this plan, there is, for us, only eternal loss. God is Master of His gifts, and He has decreed from all eternity that we shall only be *holy* in His sight, *by living through grace as children of God.*

O Heavenly Father, grant that I may preserve within my soul the grace that makes me Thy child! Keep me from all evil that might separate me from Thee! . . .

V

As you know, it is from the time of the creation of the first man that God has realized His design. Adam received for himself and for his race, the grace that made of him a child of God; but by his sin, he lost this Divine gift for himself as well as for his race. Since his revolt, we are all born sinners, deprived of the grace which would have made us children of God; we are, on the contrary, *Filii irae*, enemies of God, and children of wrath.[44] Sin crossed God's plan.

But, as the Church says, God has shown Himself ever more wonderful in the restoration of His designs than He had been in the creation: *Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabilter condisti et* MIRABILIU *reformasti.*[45] How is this done?—*What is this Divine marvel?*

This mystery is the *Incarnation.*

It is through the Incarnate Word that God will restore all things. Such is the "mystery which hath been hidden from eternity,"[46] in the thoughts of God, and which St. Paul reveals to us. Christ, the Man-God, will be our Mediator; He it is Who will reconcile us with God and restore grace to us. And as the great design has been foreseen from all eternity, it is with good reason that St. Paul speaks of it as an ever-present mystery. It is the last great feature of the Divine Plan made known to us by the great Apostle.

Let us listen to him with faith, for here we touch the very heart of the Divine work.

The Divine design is to constitute Christ the Head of all the redeemed, of all that is named in this world and in that which is to come: *Quod nominatur non solum in hoc saeculo sed in futuro,*[47] in order that by Him, with Him, and in Him, we may all arrive at union with God, and realize the supernatural holiness which God requires of us.

There is no thought more clearly expressed in the Epistles of St.

[44] Ephes. ii, 3. [45] Offertory of the Mass. [46] Ephes. iii, 9. [47] Ibid. i, 21.

Paul, none of which he is more convinced, or that he places in higher relief. Read all his Epistles and you will see that he continually returns to this, to the extent of making it almost all the substance of his doctrine. In this passage of the Epistle to the Ephesians that I quoted at the beginning what does he tell us? It *is in Christ* that God has chosen us, that we should be holy; He has predestinated us to be His adopted children, *through Jesus Christ*. . . . "He hath graced us *in His beloved Son*." It is in His Son, Jesus, that God has resolved "to re-establish all things". *Instaturare omnia in Christo*, or rather, according to the Greek text, "to gather together all things under Christ, as under one only Head".[48] Christ is always foremost in the Divine idea.

How is this realized?

The Word Whose eternal generation we adore in the Bosom of the Father, *in sinu Patris*, is made flesh: *Et Verbum caro factum est*.[49] The most Holy Trinity has created a humanity like to ours, and from the first instant of His creation has united it in an ineffable and indissoluble manner to the Person of the Word, of the Son, of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. This God-Man is Jesus Christ. This union is so close that there is only one single Person, that of the Word. Perfect God, *Perfectus Deus*, by His Divine nature, the Word becomes, by His Incarnation, perfect Man: *Perfectus homo*. In making Himself man, He remains God: *Quod fuit permansit, quod non erat assumpsit*:[50] the fact of having taken a human nature in order to unite it to Himself has not lessened the Divinity.

In Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, the two natures are united without admixture or confusion, they remain distinct while being united in the unity of the Person. On account of the personal character of this union, Christ is the very Son of God, He possesses the life of God: *Sicut Pater habet vitam in semetipso, sic dedit et Filio habere vitam in semetipso*.[51] The same Divine life subsists in God and fills the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. The Father communicates His life to the Word, to His Son, and the Word communicates it to the Humanity which He has personally united to Himself. That is why, in looking upon Our Lord, the Eternal Father recognizes Him as His own Son: *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te*.[52] And because He is His Son, because this Humanity is the Humanity of His Son, it possesses a full and entire communication of all the Divine perfections. The soul of Christ is filled with all the treasures of God's knowledge and wisdom: *In quo sunt* OMNES THESAURI *sapientiae et scientiae*.[53] In Christ, says St. Paul, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally". *In ipso inhabitat*

[48] Ephes. i, 10. [49] Joan 1, 14. [50] Antiphon of the Office of the Circumcision.
[51] Joan. v, 26. [52] Ps. ii, 7; Hebr. v, 5. [53] Col. ii, 3.

OMNIS PLENITUDO *divinitatis corporaliter;*[54] the holy Humanity is filled with grace and truth.[55]

The Word made flesh is, therefore, adorable in His Humanity as in His Divinity, because beneath this Humanity is veiled the Divine life. O Jesus Christ, Incarnate Word, I cast myself down before Thee, because Thou art the Son of God, equal to the Father. Thou art indeed the Son of God, *Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero.* Thou art the beloved Son of the Father, in Whom He is well pleased. I love and adore Thee! *Venite adoremus!*

But, this Divine life which is in Jesus Christ is to overflow from Him upon us, upon the whole human race. This is a wonderful revelation which fills us with joy.

The Divine Sonship which is in Christ by nature, and makes Him God's own and only Son, *Unigenitus qui est in sinu Patris,* is to be extended to us by grace, so that in the thought of God, Christ is the First-born of many brethren, who are by grace what He is by nature, sons of God: *Praedestinavit nos conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus.*[56]

We are here at the central point of the Divine Plan: *it is from Jesus Christ, it is through Jesus Christ that we receive the Divine adoption.* "God sent His Son", says St. Paul, "that we might receive the adoption of sons"; *Deus misit Filium suum factum ex muliere, ut . . . adoptionem filiorum reciperemus.*[57] The grace of Christ the Son of God is communicated to us so as to become in us the principle of adoption; it is from this fulness of Divine life and grace of Jesus Christ that we must all draw. After having said that the fulness of the Divinity dwells corporally in Christ, St. Paul adds immediately by way of conclusion: *Et estis in illo repleti, qui est caput omnis principatus et potestatis.*[58] Behold in Him you have all, because He is your Head. And St. John says likewise, after having shown us the Word, full of grace and truth: "And of His fulness we have all received." *Et de plenitudine ejus nos omnes accepimus.*[59]

Thus, not only has the Father chosen us from all eternity in His Christ: *Elegit nos in ipso*—note the expression *In ipso*: all that is apart from Christ does not exist, so to speak, in the Divine thought—but it is also by Jesus Christ that we receive grace, the means of the adoption He destines for us: *Qui praedestinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum* PER JESUM CHRISTUM.[60] We are sons, like Jesus, we by grace,

[54] Ibid. ii, 9. [55] Joan. i, 14. [56] Rom. viii, 29. [57] Gal. iv, 5.
[58] Col. ii, 10. *Qui est caput Christus.* Ephes. iv, 15.
[59] Joan. i. 16. [60] Ephes. i, 5.

He by nature; He, God's own Son, we His adopted sons: *Et ipse filius et nos filii; ille proprius, nos adoptivi, sed ille salvat et nos salvamur.*[61] It is by Christ that we enter into God's family, it is from Him and by Him that grace and consequently Divine life come to us: *Ego sum vita . . . ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*[62]

Such is the very source of our holiness. As everything in Jesus Christ can be summed up in His Divine Sonship, thus everything in the Christian can be summed up in his participation of this sonship, by Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ. *Our holiness is nothing else but this: the more we participate in the Divine life through the communication Jesus Christ makes to us of the grace of which He ever possesses the fulness, the higher is the degree of our holiness.* Christ is not only holy in Himself, He is *our* holiness. All the holiness God has destined for our souls has been placed in the Humanity of Christ, and it is from this source that we must draw.

"O Jesus Christ", we sing with the Church in the *Gloria* of the Mass: "Thou only art holy": *Tu solus sanctus, Jesu Christe.* Only holy, because Thou dost possess the fulness of the Divine life; only holy, because it is from Thee alone that we look for our holiness: Thou hast become, as the great Apostle says, *our* justice, *our* wisdom, *our* redemption, *our* holiness: *Estis in Christo Jesu qui factus est* NOBIS *sapientia a Deo et justitia et sanctificatio et redemptio.*[63] In Thee we find all; in receiving Thee, we receive all; for in giving Thee to us, Thy Father, Who is our Father, as Thou hast Thyself said,[64] has given us all: *Quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?*[65] All the graces of salvation and forgiveness, all riches, all the supernatural fruitfulness with which the world of souls abounds, come from Thee alone: *In Christo habemus redemptionem . . . secundum divitias gratiae ejus quae superabundavit in nobis.*[66] Let all praise be given to Thee, O Christ; and by Thee may all praise ascend to Thy Father for the unspeakable gift He has made us of Thee!

VI

We must all be partakers of the holiness of Jesus. Christ excludes no one from the life He has brought, and, by it, He renders us children of God: *Pro omnibus mortuus est Christus;*[67] Christ has re-opened the gates of eternal life to all humanity. As St. Paul says: He is the first-born, but of a multitude of brethren: *In multis fratribus.*[68] The

[61] Migne, P. L. lxviii, 701. [62] Joan. x, 10. [63] I Cor. i, 30. [64] Joan. xx, 17.
[65] Rom. viii, 32. [66] Ephes. i, 8. [67] II Cor. v, 15. [68] Rom. viii, 29.

Eternal Father wishes to constitute Christ His Son, Head of a Kingdom, the Kingdom of His children. The Divine Plan would not be complete if Christ was isolated. It is His glory, as it is the glory of the Father, *In laudem gloriae gratiae suae*,[69] to be at the head of an innumerable company, which is His complement, πλήρωμα and without which, so to say, He would not be complete.

St. Paul distinctly says this in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he traces out the Divine Plan: God has made Christ to sit "on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality and power and virtue and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And He hath subjected all things under His feet, and hath made Him head over all the Church which is His body."[70] It is this company, this Church that Christ has acquired, according to the words of the same Apostle, that it may be at the last day, without "spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish": *Ut exhiberet ipse sibi gloriosam Ecclesiam, non habentem maculam, aut rugam, aut aliquid hujusmodi, sed ut sit sancta et immaculata.*[71] This Church, this Kingdom is being formed even here below. It is only entered by Baptism. On earth we live in it by grace, in faith, hope, and charity, but the day will come when we shall contemplate its perfection in heaven; that will be the kingdom of glory in the light of vision, the rejoicing in unending possession and union. That is why St. Paul said that "the grace of God is life everlasting, in Christ Jesus, our Lord."[72]

This is the great mystery of God's design. *Si scires donum Dei!* If you but knew the gift of God! Gift ineffable in itself, ineffable above all in its source, which is *love*.

It is because He loves us that God wills to make us share, as His children, His own beatitude: *Videte qualem caritatem dedit nobis Pater ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.*[73] The love which makes us such a gift is infinite, for, says St. Leo: "the gift surpassing all gifts is that God calls man His child, and that man calls God his Father".[74] Each of us can say in all truth: It is by a special act of love and kindness that God has created and called me by Baptism to Divine adoption, for in His plenitude and infinite riches, God has no need of any creature: *Genuit nos* VOLUNTARIE *verbo veritatis suae.*[75] By a special act of love and complacency God has chosen me, *Elegit nos*, to be raised infinitely above my natural condition, to enjoy eternally His own

[69] Ephes. i, 6. [70] Ibid. i, 20-23. [71] Ibid v, 27. [72] Rom. vi, 23.
[73] I Joan. iii, 1.
[74] *Omnia dona excedit hoc donum ut Deus hominem vocet filium et homo Deum nominet Patrem.* Serm. VI. de Nativ. [75] Jac. i, 18.

beatitude, to be the realization of one of His Divine thoughts, to be a voice in the concert of the elect, to be one of those brethren who are like to Jesus, and share for ever His heavenly inheritance.

This love is manifested with special splendour in the way the Divine plan is fulfilled "in Jesus Christ" *in Christo Jesu.*

"By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world, *that we may live by Him.*"[76] Yes, God loves us so much, that to show us this love He has given us His only-begotten Son: *Sic Deus dilexit mundum ut Filium suum Unigenitum daret;*[77] He has given us His Son, so that His Son may become our Brother, and that we may one day be His co-heirs, and share in the riches of His grace and glory: *Ut ostenderet . . .* ABUNDANTES DIVITIAS *gratiae suae* IN BONITATE SUPER NOS *in Christo Jesu.*[78]

Such is then in its majestic range and merciful simplicity God's plan for us. *God wills our holiness*, He wills it because He loves us infinitely, and we ought to will it with Him. He wills to make us saints *in making us participate in His very life*, and for that end, He *adopts us as His children*, and the heirs of His infinite glory and eternal beatitude. *Grace* is the principle of this holiness, supernatural in its source, in its acts, and in its fruits. But God only gives us this adoption *through His Son, Jesus Christ.* It is in Him, and by Him, that God wills to unite Himself to us, and that we should be united to Him: NEMO *venit ad Patrem nisi per Me.*[79] Christ is the Way, the only way, to lead us to God, and without Him we can do nothing: *Sine Me* NIHIL *potestis facere.*[80] Our holiness has no other foundation than that same one which God has established, that is to say, union with Jesus Christ *Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere, praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Jesus.*[81]

Thus, God communicates the fulness of His Divine life to the Humanity of Christ, and through it, to all souls in the measure of their predestination in Jesus Christ: *Secundum mensuram donationis Christi.*[82]

We must understand that we can only be saints according to the measure in which the life of Jesus Christ is in us: that is the only holiness God asks of us; there is no other. We can only be holy in Jesus Christ, otherwise we cannot be so at all. There is not an atom of this holiness in creation; it proceeds from God by a supremely free act of His Almighty Will, and that is why it is supernatural.

St. Paul returns more than once to the gratuitousness of the Divine

[76] I Joan. iv, 9. [77] Joan. iii, 16. [78] Ephes. ii, 7. [79] Joan. xvi, 6.
[80] Joan. xv, 5. [81] I Cor. iii, 11. [82] Ephes. iv, 7.

Gift of adoption, and also to the eternity of the ineffable love which determined Him to make us partakers of it, and to the wonderful means of realizing it through the grace of Jesus Christ. He bids his disciple, Timothy, remember that God has "called us by His holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the world".[83] By grace you are saved through faith, he wrote to the faithful of Ephesus, "and not through your own works, that no man may glory".[84]

VII

It is to God that all glory must be referred. This glory is the end of the Divine work.[85] St. Paul shows us this when he concludes his exposition of the Divine Plan in these words: *In laudem gloriae gratiae suae.*

If God adopts us as His children; if He realizes this adoption through the grace of which the plenitude is in His Son Jesus; if He wills to make us partakers in Christ's eternal inheritance, it is for the exaltation of His glory.

Remark how insistently St. Paul dwells upon this point in exposing the Divine Plan to us in the words I quoted at the beginning: God "has predestinated us . . . unto the praise of the glory of His grace": *In laudem gloria gratiae suae.*[86] He twice returns to this point further on: "In Whom we who are called . . . being predestinated unto the praise of His glory": *Ut simus in laudem gloriae ejus.*[87]

[83] II Tim. i, 9.

[84] Ephes. ii, 8-9. *Gratia enim estis salvati per fidem et hoc non ex vobis, Dei enim donum est, non ex operibus, ut ne quis glorietur.*

[85] The Vatican Council has defined that, "it is not to increase His beatitude, nor to put the seal to His perfection, but to manifest this perfection by the help of the benefits God heaps upon His creatures, that He has freely drawn the creature from nothing by an act at once of His goodness and Almighty power." (Dogmatic Constitution *De fide Catholica*). In the 4th canon, the Council pronounces an anthema against "whoever shall deny that the world was created for God's glory".—From these texts it follows that God created the world for His glory, that this glory consists in the manifestation of His perfections by the gifts He bestows upon His creatures, that the motive freely determining Him thus to glorify Himself is His goodness (or, *formaliter,* the love of His goodness). God therefore unites the happiness of the creature to His glory; to glorify God becomes our beatitude. "The gifts of God", says D. L. Janssens "have no other source and no other end than the supreme goodness of which His glory is the most synthetic expression." Now the gift by excellence, whence all the others flow for us, is that of the hypostatic union in Christ: *Sic Deus dilexit mundum ut Filium suum Unigentum* DARET . . . *Quomodo* CUM ILLO *non* OMNIA *nobis* DONAVIT?

[86] Ephes. i, 6. Note the use in the Greek text of the preposition *εἰς* which denotes the end towards which one tends in an active manner.

[87] Ephes. i, 12 and 14; cf. Philip. i, 10-11. That you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." *In gloriam et laudem Dei.*

The first expression of the Apostle is particularly remarkable. He does not say unto the glory of His grace, but "unto the praise of the glory of His grace"; which means that this grace will be surrounded with the splendour attached to a triumph. Why does St. Paul speak thus? It is because in order to restore to us the Divine adoption, Christ has had to triumph over the obstacles created by sin. But these obstacles have only served to make the Divine marvels in the work of our supernatural restoration shine out the more in the sight of the whole world: *Mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti.* Each of the elect is the fruit of the Blood of Jesus, and of the wonderful operations of His grace; all the elect are so many trophies won by this Divine Blood, and that is why they are all like a glorious praise to Christ and to His Father: *Ut simus in laudem gloriae ejus.*

I said at the beginning that the Divine perfection of which the Angels especially sing the praise is holiness: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.* But what is the outburst of praise which rises from the choir of the elect in heaven? What is the uninterrupted canticle of that immense multitude that constitutes the kingdom of which Christ is the Head? "O Lamb that wast slain, Thou hast redeemed us, Thou hast made us to our God a kingdom: to Thee and to Him that sitteth on the Throne, praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever."[88] That is the song of praise with which heaven resounds to exalt the triumph of the grace of Jesus: *In laudem* GLORIAE *gratiae suae.*

We enter, then, into the eternal designs, if, even here below, we join in this canticle. When St. Paul writes this wonderful Epistle to the Ephesians, he is a prisoner; but at this moment when he is preparing to reveal to them the mystery hidden from the beginning, he is so transported with the greatness of the mystery of the Divine adoption in Jesus Christ, he is so dazzled with the "unfathomable riches" brought by Christ, that, in spite of his privations, he cannot refrain from exclaiming at the very beginning of his letter, in an outburst of praise and thanksgiving: "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ Who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in Christ."[89] Yes, blessed be the Eternal Father Who has called us to Himself from all eternity to make us His children, and partakers of His own life and His own beatitude; Who, in order to fulfil His designs, has given us in Jesus Christ, all good, all riches, all treasures, so that in Him nothing is wanting to us: *Ita ut nihil vobis desit in ulla gratia!*[90]

This is the Divine Plan.

All our holiness consists in entering more and more deeply, by the

[88] Apoc. v, 9 and 14. [89] Ephes. i, 3. [90] Cor. i, 7.

light of faith, into this *Sacramentum absconditum*, in entering into the design of God and realizing the eternal economy in ourselves.

He Whose Will it is to save us and to make us holy has traced out the plan with a wisdom only equalled by His goodness. Let us adapt ourselves to this Divine design by which God wills that we should find our holiness in our conformity to Christ Jesus. Once again, there is no other way; we shall only be pleasing to the Eternal Father—and is not that the whole substance of sanctity: to be pleasing to God?—if He recognizes in us the features of His Son. We must, by grace and by our virtues, be so identified with Christ that the Father, in looking down upon our souls, will recognize us as His true children and be well pleased with us as He was when contemplating Jesus Christ during His earthly life. Christ is His Beloved Son, and it is in Him that we shall be filled with all blessing which will lead us to the fulness of our adoption in the beatitude of heaven.

How good it is to repeat now, in the light of these truths, the prayer that Jesus Himself, the Beloved Son of the Father, has placed on our lips, which, coming from Him, is pre-eminently the prayer of the child of God: O Holy Father, Who dwellest in Heaven, we are Thy children, since Thou dost will to be called Our Father! May Thy Name be hallowed, honoured, glorified! May Thy perfections be praised and exalted more and more upon the earth! May we manifest in ourselves, by our works, the splendour of Thy grace! Extend then Thy reign; may Thy Kingdom ever increase, this Kingdom which is also that of Thy Son, since Thou hast made Him the head of it. May Thy Son be truly the King of our souls, and may we testify to His kingship over us by the perfect accomplishment of Thy Will! May we, like Him, ever seek to adhere to Thee by fulfilling Thy good pleasure,[91] Thy eternal designs for us, so as to be like to Jesus in all things, and through Him, worthy children of Thy love!

[91] *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper.* Joan. viii, 29.

II. CHRIST THE ONLY MODEL OF ALL PERFECTION

CAUSA EXEMPLARIS

SUMMARY. Fruitfulness and different aspects of the mystery of Christ. 1. Necessity of *knowing God* in order to be united to Him; God *reveals Himself* to us *in His Son Jesus*: "who sees Him sees His Father". II. Christ our *Model in His Person*: perfect God; perfect man; *grace*, the fundamental sign of *similitude with Jesus*, considered *in His state* of Son of God. III. Christ our *Model in His works* and *virtues*. IV. *Our imitation* of Christ is realized *by grace*; and secondly by the *essential disposition* of referring everything *to the glory of His Father. Christianus alter Christus.*

WHEN we read the Epistles of St. Paul to the Christians of his time, it is striking to see with what insistency he speaks of the mystery of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He constantly returns to this subject which has taken such possession of him that Christ is his very life: *Mihi vivere Christus est.*[1] He spends himself, without counting the cost, for Christ and His members: *Ego autem libentissime impendam, et superimpendar ipse pro animabus vestris.*[2]

Chosen and instructed by Jesus Himself to be the herald of His mystery throughout the world,[3] he has penetrated so deeply into its depths and glories, that his one desire is to unveil it and make the adorable Person of Christ known and loved. He writes to the Colossians that he is filled with joy in the midst of his tribulations in the thought that it has been given to him to announce "the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations but now is manifested to His saints, to whom God would make known the riches of the glory of this mystery . . . which is Christ".[4]

See how when he is in prison he is told that others besides himself are preaching Christ; some are doing this out of a spirit of contention in opposition to him; others with good intentions. Does he feel trouble or jealousy? Quite the contrary. Provided Christ is preached, what does it matter to him? "So that by all means, whether by occasion, or by truth, Christ be preached, in this also I rejoice, yea and will rejoice":

[1] Philip. i, 21. [2] II Cor. xii, 15. [3] Ephes. iii, 5-9. [4] Col. i, 26-27.

Et in hoc gaudeo, sed et gaudebo.[5] Thus he refers all his knowledge, all his preaching, all his love, all his life to Jesus Christ: *Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos nisi Jesum Christum.*[6] In the labours and struggles of his apostolate, one of his joys is to think that he is "in labour"—it is his own expression—to form Christ in souls.[7]

The Christians of the first ages understood the doctrine the great apostle set forth to them. They understood that God has given His only Son Christ Jesus that He may be for us "our wisdom, justice, sanctification and redemption";[8] they understood the divine plan: namely, that God has given to Christ the fulness of grace that we may find all in Him. They lived by this doctrine, *Christus . . . vita vestra,*[9] and that is why their spiritual life was at once so simple and bore so much fruit.

Now let us remind ourselves that, in these our days, the Heart of God is not less loving nor His arm less powerful. God is ready to shed His graces upon us, I do not say as extraordinary in their character, but as abundant and as useful as those He shed upon the first Christians. He does not love us less than He loved them. All the means of sanctification that they had, we too possess; we have besides the examples of the saints who have followed Christ to encourage us. But we are too often like Naaman the leper who came to consult the prophet and beg his cure; he was on the point of not obtaining it because he found the remedy too simple.[10]

That is the case with some of those who undertake the spiritual life; people are to be met with who are so attached to their own way of seeing things that they are scandalized at the simplicity of the divine plan. And this scandal is not without harm. These souls that have not understood the mystery of Christ lose themselves in a multiplicity of details and often weary themselves in a joyless labour. Why is this? Because all that our human ingenuity is able to create for our inner life serves for nothing if we do not base our edifice upon Christ: *Funda-*

[5] Phil. i, 15. [6] I Cor. ii, 2. [7] Gal. iv, 19. [8] I Cor. i, 30. [9] Col. iii, 4.

[10] IV Reg. v, 1 sq. Our Lord Himself makes allusion to this fact. (Cf. Luc. iv, 27.) Naaman, the general of the Syrian army, was stricken with leprosy. Having heard of the wonders of the prophet Eliseus had worked in Samaria, he went to implore his cure. "Go, and wash seven times in the Jordan," was the message Eliseus sent to him, "and thou shalt be clean." This reply angered Naaman. "I thought he would have come out to me," he said to his servants, "and standing would have invoked the name of the Lord His God, and touched with his hand the place of the leprosy, and healed me. Are not the Abana, and the Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel that I may wash in them and be made clean?" And full of disappointment and indignation he was about to return to his own country. But his servants came to him and said: "Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it; how much rather what he now hath said to thee?" Naaman admits this sensible suggestion, goes and plunges himself seven times in the Jordan and, according to the word of the man of God, he is cured of his leprosy.

mentum aliud NEMO *potest ponere praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Jesus.*[11]

This explains the change that sometimes takes place in certain souls. For years, their lives have been as it were cramped, they have been often depressed, hardly ever contented, for ever finding new difficulties in the spiritual life. Then one day God gives them the grace of understanding that Christ is our All, that He is the *Alpha* and *Omega*,[12] that out of Him we have nothing, that in Him we have everything, for everything is summed up in Him. From that moment all is, as it were, changed for these souls; their difficulties vanish like the shades of night before the rising sun. As soon as Our Lord, the true Sun of our lives, *Sol justitiae*,[13] fully illumines these souls, they unfold, mount upwards and bear much fruit of holiness.

Doubtless, trials are not absent from the lives of such souls; they are often the very condition of inward progress; collaboration with Divine grace will also remain attentive and generous, but all that narrows the soul and leads to discouragement disappears. Such souls live in the light; they dilate in it. *Viam mandatorum tuorum cucurri cum dilatasti cor meum;*[14] their life becomes simplified. They understand the poverty of the means they had themselves created and so often renewed, hoping by them to prop up their own spiritual edifice. They grasp the truth of these words: *Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam.*[15] Unless Thou, O Lord, dost build Thyself a dwelling in us, we shall never be able to form a habitation worthy of Thee! It is in Christ, and no longer in self, that these souls seek the source of their holiness. They know this holiness is supernatural in its principle, its nature and its end; and that the treasures of sanctification are only to be found gathered up in Jesus, so that we may share in them: they understand that they are only rich with the riches of Christ.

These riches, according to the word of St. Paul, are unsearchable: *Investigables divitiae.*[16] We can never exhaust them and all we can say of them will always remain far below the praises of which they are worthy.

There are, however, three aspects of the mystery of Christ, which we must contemplate when we speak of Our Lord as the source of our sanctification. We borrow the idea from the doctrine of St. Thomas, the prince of theologians, in what he has written of the sanctifying causality of Christ.[17]

[11] I Cor. iii, 11. [12] Apoc. xxii, 13. [13] Malach. iv, 2.
[14] Ps. cxviii, 32. [15] Ps. cxxvi, 1. [16] Ephes. iii, 7.
[17] III, q. xxiv, a. 3, a. 4; q. xlviii, a. 6; q. l. a. 6; q. lvi, a. 1 ad. 3, a. 4.

Christ is at once the exemplary cause, the meritorious cause and the efficient cause of all our holiness. Christ is the sole Model of our per-tion—the Author of our redemption and the infinite Treasury of grace —and the efficient cause of our sanctification.

These three points sum up perfectly what we have to say of *Christ* Himself as the *life of our souls*. Grace is the principle of that super-natural life of children of God that forms the foundation and substance of all holiness. Now this grace is found in its fulness in Christ, and all the works we accomplish through grace have their model in Jesus—next, Christ has merited this grace for us by the satisfactions of His life, passion and death—lastly, Christ Himself produces this grace in us by the contact we have with Him through faith.

But these truths contain so much that we must contemplate each one separately. In this conference, we will consider Our Lord as our Divine Model in all things, as the Exemplar towards which we must tend. The first thing to be considered is the end we must attain. Once this end is clearly understood, the application of the means proper to its realization will follow quite naturally.

I

We have seen that holiness for us is only a participation in the Divine holiness. We are holy if we are children of God and if we live as true children of the Heavenly Father, worthy of our supernatural adoption. St. Paul says: "Be ye therefore followers of God as most dear children": *Estate imitatores Dei sicut filii carissimi.*[18] Jesus Him-self tells us: *Estote perfecti*, "Be you therefore perfect"—and it is to all His disciples He speaks—not with any kind of perfection, but *sicut Pater vester coelesti perfectus est*,[19] "as also your heavenly Father is perfect". And why? Because "noblesse oblige". God has adopted us as His children, and children ought to resemble their father in their lives.

But in order to imitate God, we must know Him. And how are we to know God? He "inhabiteth light inaccessible", says St. Paul. *Lucem inhabitat inaccessibilem.*[20] "No man," says St. John, "hath seen God at any time," *Deum nemo vidit unquam.*[21] How then can we reproduce and imitate the perfections of One Whom we do not see?

St. Paul gives us the answer to this question. *Illuxit nobis in facie Christi Jesu.*[22] God has revealed Himself to us by His Son and in His

[18] Ephes. v, 1. [19] Matth. v, 48. [20] I Tim. vi, 16.
[21] I Ioan. iv, 12. [22] II Cor. iv, 6.

Son Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus is "the brightness of His glory",[23] "the image of the invisible God",[24] perfectly like to His Father, capable of revealing Him to men, for He knows Him as He is known: "No one knoweth the Father," Jesus says, "but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Father to reveal Him."[25] Christ Jesus Who is always *in sinu Patris,* tells us: "I know My Father", *Ego agnosco Patrem*;[26] and He knows Him in order to reveal Him to us. *Ipse enarravit.*[27] Christ is the revelation of the Father.

And how does the Son reveal the Father? By becoming incarnate. The Word, the Son, is incarnate, is made man, and in Him, by Him, we know God. Christ is God brought within our reach under a human expression. It is the Divine perfection revealed to us under earthly forms; it is holiness itself appearing sensibly before our eyes during thirty-three years so as to be rendered tangible and imitable.[28] We can never think too much about this: Christ is God made man, living among men so as to teach them by His words and above all by His life how men ought to live in order to imitate God and please Him. We have then first of all, if we wish to live as children of God, only to open our eyes with faith and love and contemplate God in Jesus.

There is in the Gospel a very simple and yet magnificent episode. You know it, but here is the place to recall it. It was the eve of the passion of Jesus. Our Lord had been speaking, as He alone could speak, of His Father to His disciples, and these, carried out of themselves, desired to see and know the Father. The apostle Philip exclaims: "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us." *Ostende nobis Patrem et sufficit nobis.*[29] And Christ Jesus answers: "Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known Me? Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth the Father also." *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem.* Yes, Christ is the revelation of God, His Father. As God, He makes only one with Him, and he who contemplates Him, sees the revelation of God.

When you contemplate Christ abasing Himself in the poverty of the crib, recall this word: *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem.* When you see the Youth of Nazareth, full of obedience, toiling in the humble work shop until the age of thirty, say to yourself "He that seeth Him, seeth His Father", to contemplate Him is to contemplate God. When you see Christ passing through the villages of Galilee, everywhere doing good, healing the sick, announcing the good tidings; when you see the

[23] Hebr. i, 3. [24] Col. i, 15. [25] Matth. xi, 27.
[26] Joan. x, 15. [27] Ibid. i, 18.
[28] To be a model and to be imitable are the two characters which must be found in the exemplary cause.
[29] Joan. xiv, 8.

Crucified, dying for love of men, the object of the derision of His executioners, it is He Who says to you: *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem.* "He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also."

These are so many manifestations of God, so many manifestations of the Divine perfections. The perfections of God are in themselves as incomprehensible as the Divine nature. Which of us, for example, could comprehend what Divine love is? It is an abyss surpassing all we could imagine. But when we see Christ, Who, as God, is "one" with His Father, Who has in Him the same Divine life as the Father,[30] instruct men, die upon a cross, give His life for love of us; when we see Him institute the Eucharist, we then understand the greatness of God's love.

So is it with each of God's attributes, with each of His perfections; Christ reveals them to us; and according to the measure we advance in His love, He makes us enter more deeply into His mystery: *Qui autem diligit me, diligetur a Patre . . . ego diligam eum et manifestabo ei meipsum.*[31] Which amounts to saying: If anyone loves Me, receives Me in My humanity, he shall be loved of My Father, and I also will love him and will manifest Myself to him in My divinity. I will disclose its secrets to him.

"The life was manifested," writes St. John,[32] "and we have seen and do bear witness, and declare unto you the life eternal, which was with the Father, and hath appeared to us," in Christ Jesus. So that to know and imitate God, we have only to know and imitate His Son Jesus, Who is the expression at once human and divine of the infinite perfections of His Father: *Qui videt me, videt et Patrem.*

II

But how and in what is Christ, the Incarnate Word, our Model, our exemplar?

Christ is doubly our Model: in His Person and in His works; in His *state* of Son of God, and in His human *activity*, for He is at the same time Son of God and Son of man, perfect God and perfect man.

Christ is God, perfect God, *Perfectus Deus.*

Let us go in spirit to Judea, at the time of Christ. He has already fulfilled one part of His mission, journeying through Palestine, teach-

[30] *Sicut Pater habet vitam in semetipso manentem, sic et dedit Filio habere vitam in semetipso.* Joan. v, 26.

[31] Joan. xiv, 21.

[32] Joan. i, 2.

ing and accomplishing the "works of God".[33] Behold Him after a day of apostolic labour, gone apart from the multitude, surrounded only by His disciples. He asks them: "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?"[34] The disciples echo all that is noised abroad concerning Him.

"Some John the Baptist, and others Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." "But whom do you say that I am?" Jesus asks. Then Peter answering says to Him: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." And Our Lord, confirming the testimony of His apostle, responds: "Blessed art thou . . . because flesh and blood (natural intuition) hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven."[35]

Christ is then the Son of God, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, as the *Credo* expresses it. Christ, says St. Paul, "thought it not robbery" to call Himself equal with the Father: *Non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo.*[36]

Thrice, moreover, the voice of the Eternal Father made itself heard to the world, and each time it was to glorify Christ by proclaiming Him to be His Son, the Son in Whom He is well pleased: *Hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite.*[37] Let us prostrate ourselves like the disciples who heard this voice of the Father on Thabor, and with Peter, inspired from on high, let us say to Jesus: Yes, Thou art the Christ, the Incarnate Word, true God, equal to Thy Father, perfect God, possessing all the Divine attributes; Thou art, O Jesus, with Thy Father and the Holy Ghost, the Almighty; Thou art the Eternal. Thou art infinite Love. I believe in Thee, and I adore Thee "my Lord and my God!"

Son of God, Christ is also Son of man, perfect Man: *Perfectus homo.*

The Son of God is made flesh; He remains what He is—perfect God. But He unites Himself to a human nature, complete like ours, integral in its essence, with all its native properties. Like all of us Christ is "made of a woman".[38] He belongs authentically to our race. Often in the Gospel, He calls Himself "the Son of man"; eyes of flesh have seen Him, human hands have touched Him.[39] Even on the morrow of His glorious resurrection, He makes the incredulous Apostles verify the reality of His human nature: *Palpate et videte quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habet sicut me videtis habere.*[40]

Like each of us, He has a soul, created directly by God; a body

[33] Joan. ix, 4.
[34] Matth. xvi, 13-16.
[35] Ibid. 16.
[36] Philip ii, 6.
[37] Matth. xvii, 5; cf. iii, 47; Joan. xii, 28.
[38] Gal. iv, 4.
[39] I Joan. i, 1.
[40] Luc. xxiv, 39.

formed of the substance of a woman, an intelligence to know, a will to love and choose; all the faculties that we have, memory and imagination. He has passions in the philosophical, elevated, and noble sense of the word, in the sense excluding all disorder and all weakness; for in Him these passions are perfectly subject to reason and only moved by an act of His will.[41] His human nature is then similar in everything to that of His brethren: *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari*, says St. Paul,[42] excepting sin: *Absque peccato*.[43] Jesus has not known sin, nor that which is the source and consequence of sin—ignorance, error, sickness, all things unworthy of His wisdom, His dignity and His divinity.

But our Divine Saviour willed, during His mortal life, to bear our infirmities, all those infirmities compatible with His sanctity. The Gospel clearly shows us this. There is nothing in the nature of man that Jesus has not sanctified; our labours, our sufferings, our tears. He has made all these His own. See Him at Nazareth: during thirty years He spent His life in the obscure toil of an artisan, inasmuch that when He began to preach, His compatriots were astonished, for up to this time they had only known Him as the son of the carpenter: *Unde huic omnia ista? Nonne hic est fabri filius?*[44]

Like us Our Lord has felt hunger; after having fasted in the desert "He was hungry": *Postea esuriit*.[45] He has suffered thirst: did He not ask the Samaritan woman to give Him to drink, *Da mihi bibere*?[46] and upon the cross did He not cry: "I thirst." *Sitio?* Like us He has felt fatigue; He was often fatigued by His long journeyings throughout Palestine. When at Jacob's well, He asked for water to quench His thirst. St. John tells us that He was wearied; it was the hour of noon, and after having walked far and being wearied, He sat down on the side of the well: *Fatigatus ex itinere, sedebat sic supra fontem. Hora erat quasi sexta*.[47] Thus then, in the words of St. Augustine in the wonderful commentary he has given us on this beautiful evangelical scene, "He Who is the very Strength of God is overwhelmed with lassitude": *Fatigatur Virtus Dei*.[48] Slumber has closed His eyelids; He slept in the boat when the tempest arose: *Ipse vero dormiebat*.[49] He really slept, so the apostles fearing to be engulfed by the angry waves, had to awaken Him. He wept over Jerusalem, His own city which He loved despite its ingratitude; the thought of the disasters that, after His death, were to fall upon it drew tears from His eyes: "If thou hadst also known . . . the things that are to thy

[41] Theology names these *propassions*, in order to denote by this special term their character of transcendance and purity.

[42] Hebr. ii, 17. [43] Ibid. iv, 15. [44] Matth. xiii, 55-56. [45] Ibid. iv, 2.
[46] Joan. iv, 7. [47] Ibid. 6. [48] *Tract. in Joan.* xv. [49] Matth. viii, 24.

peace!" *Flevit super illam.*[50] He wept at the death of Lazarus, as we weep over those we cherish, so that the Jews who witnessed this sight said to one another: "Behold how He loved Him![51] Christ shed tears because His Heart was touched; He wept for him who was His friend; the tears sprang from the depth of His Heart. Several times too it is said of Him in the Gospel that His Heart was touched with compassion.[52]

Still more than this, He has felt sadness, heaviness and fear: *Coepit pavere et taedere, et moestus esse*;[53] in His agony in the Garden of Olives, His soul is overwhelmed with sorrow: *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem;*[54] anguish penetrated His soul to the point of wringing from it "a strong cry and tears".[55] All the mockeries, all the outrages with which He was saturated in His Passion, the being buffeted and spit upon, all these insults, far from leaving Him insensible, caused Him intense suffering. His nature being more perfect, His sensibility was the greater and more delicate. He was plunged in an abyss of suffering. Lastly, after having shown Himself to be truly man, like to us in all things, He willed to endure death like all the sons of Adam: *Et inclinato capite tradidit spiritum.*[56]

It is then both as Son of God and Son of man, that Our Lord is our Model—but He is so first of all as Son of God. This *state* of Son of God is properly speaking what is essential and fundamental in Christ, and it is in this we must first of all resemble Him.

And how can we do so?

The Divine Sonship of Christ is the type of our supernatural sonship; His condition, His "being" the Son of God is the exemplar of the state in which we must be established by sanctifying grace. Christ is the Son of God by nature and by right, in virtue of the union of the Eternal Word with human nature;[57] we are so by adoption and grace, but we are so really and truly. Christ has, moreover, sanctifying grace; He possesses the fulness of it; from this fulness it flows into us more or less abundantly, but, in its substance, it is the same grace that both fills the created soul of Jesus and deifies us. St. Thomas says that our divine filiation is a resemblance of the eternal filiation: *Quaedam similitudo filiationis aternae.*[58]

[50] Luc. xix, 41. [51] Joan. xi, 36.

[52] *Misericordia motus,* Luc. vii, 13; *Misereor super turbam,* Marc. viii, 2; cf. Matth. xv, 32. [53] Marc. xiv, 33; Matth. xxvi, 37. [54] Ibid. 38.

[55] *In diebus carnis suae, preces supplicationesque ad eum qui posset illum salvum facere a morte cum clamore valido et lacrymis offerens.* Hebr. v, 7. [56] Joan. xix, 30.

[57] This is called in theology the "grace of union", in virtue of which a human nature was chosen to be united in an ineffable manner to the Divine Person, the Word, and thus to be the humanity of a God. This grace is unique and only to be found in Jesus Christ. [58] I, q. xxii, a. 3.

Such is the primordial and supereminent manner in which Christ is first of all our example: in the Incarnation He is constituted, by right, the Son of God; we should become so by being partakers of the grace derived from Him which, deifying the substance of our souls, constitutes us in the state of children of God. That is the first and *essential* characteristic of the likeness we must have to Christ Jesus; it is the condition of all our supernatural activity. If first and above all we do not possess in us this *sanctifying grace* which is the *fundamental sign of similitude with Jesus*, the Eternal Father will not recognize us for His own; and all we do in our lives without this grace is of no merit to make us partakers of the everlasting inheritance: we shall only be coheirs with Christ if we are His brethren by grace.[59]

III

Christ is also our Model *in His works.*

We have seen how truly He *was* man, we must now see how truly He *acted* as man.

In this again, Our Lord is for us a perfect, and yet an accessible model of all holiness. In an incomparable degree, He practised all the virtues that can adorn human nature, all those at least that were compatible with His Divine nature.

You know that with sanctifying grace, there was given to the Soul of Christ the magnificent array of virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. These virtues flowed from grace as from a fountain-head, they were expressed in all their perfection in the course of the life of Jesus.

Evidently He had not faith. This theological virtue only exists in a soul not yet enjoying the vision of God. The Soul of Christ contemplated God face to face; It could not exercise faith in regard to this God Whom it saw; but it had that submission of the will necessary to the perfection of faith, that reverence, that adoration of God, the first and infallible Truth. This disposition was in the highest degree in the Soul of Christ.

Neither had Jesus, properly speaking, the virtue of hope: it is no longer possible to hope for what is already possessed. The theological virtue of hope makes us desire the possession of God, whilst giving us the confidence of receiving the graces necessary to arrive at this possession. Through its union with the Word, the Soul of Christ was filled with the Divinity; It could not then have hope; this virtue only existed

[59] *O si cognovisses Dei gratiam per Jesum Christum Dominum Nostrum ipsamque ejus Incarnationem, qua hominis animam corpusque suscepit, summum esse exemplum gratiae videre potuisses!* St. Augustin. *De Civitate Dei*, x, 29.

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in Christ in the sense that He could desire, and indeed did desire, the glorification of His holy Humanity, the accidental glory that was to come to Him after His Resurrection: *Clarifica me, Pater.*[60] He possessed in Himself, from the moment of His Incarnation, the source and root of this glory; He allowed it to appear for an instant at His Transfiguration on Thabor, but His mission on earth among men obliged Him to veil its spendour until His death. There were also certain graces Christ asked from His Father; for example, at the resurrection of Lazarus we hear Him addressing these words to His Father with the most absolute confidence: *Pater ego sciebam quia semper me audis.*[61]

As to charity, He practised it to a supreme degree. The Heart of Christ is an immense furnace of love. The great love of Christ is that which He bears towards His Father. All His life can be summed up in these words: "I do always the things that please My Father."

Let us meditate these words in our prayer; only thus shall we be able to penetrate a little into their secret. This unspeakable love, this tending of the Soul of Christ towards His Father is the necessary consequence of His hypostatic union. The Son is altogether *Ad Patrem*, as the theologians say: this is, if I may thus express it, His essence: the holy Humanity is carried along by this divine current; having become, by the Incarnation, the Humanity of the Son of God, it therefore belongs entirely to the Father. The fundamental disposition, the primary and habitual sentiment of the Soul of Christ is necessarily this: I live for My Father, "I love My Father."[62] It is because He loves His Father that Jesus gives Himself up to all He wills; His first act on coming into the world is an act of love towards Him: "Behold I come to do Thy will."[63] It may be said that His whole existence here below was only to be the continued expression of this initial act. . . . During His life, He loves to repeat that His meat is to do the will of His Father;[64] therefore He always did the things that pleased Him: *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper.*[65] All that His Father had decreed for Him, He fulfilled to the least detail.[66] Lastly, it was out of love for His Father that He was made obedient to the death of the cross: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem, sic facio.*[67] Never let us forget this: if Christ was able to say "Greater love than this no man hath than to lay down his life for his friends",[68] if it is of faith that He died for us and for our salvation, *Propter nos et propter nostram salutem*, it remains true that it was before all, out of love for His Father, that Our

[60] Joan. xvii, 5. [61] Ibid. xi, 42. [62] Joan. xiv, 31. [63] Hebr. x, 7.
[64] Joan. iv, 34. [65] Ibid. viii, 29. [66] Matth. v, 18. [67] Joan. xiv, 31.
[68] Ibid. xv, 13.

Lord laid down His life. In loving us, it is His Father He loves; He sees us, He finds us in His Father: *Ego pro eis rogo . . . quia tui sunt.*[69] These are His own words: "I pray for them . . . because they are Thine." Yes, Christ loves us, because we are the children of His Father, because we belong to His Father. He loves us with an ineffable love, surpassing all we can imagine, to such a point that each of us can say with St. Paul: *Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me,*[70] "Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me".

Our Lord possessed too all the other virtues. Meekness and humility: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of Heart";[71] He, the Saviour, before Whom every knee bows in heaven and on earth, kneels before His disciples to wash their feet. Obedience: He is subject to His Mother and St. Joseph; one word of the Gospel sums up His hidden life at Nazareth: *Et erat subditus illis.*[72] He obeys the Mosaic law; He goes assiduously to the assemblies in the Temple; He submits Himself to the powers lawfully established, declaring it necessary to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's";[73] He Himself pays the tribute money. Patience: how many testimonies has He not given of this especially during His bitter Passion! His infinite mercy towards sinners: with what kindness He welcomes the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalen! As the Good Shepherd, He hastens to seek the straying sheep and bring it back to the fold. He is full of ardent zeal for the glory and interests of His Father; it is because of this zeal He drives out the sellers in the Temple and flings anathemas at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. His prayer is continual: *Erat pernoctans in oratione Dei.*[74] What shall we say of those sublime communications between the Incarnate Ward and His Father, of the spirit of religion and adoration with which Our Lord was animated?

In Him then every virtue blossomed in its season for the glory of God and for our salvation.

You know that the ancient patriarchs, before leaving this world, used to give to their eldest son a solemn blessing that was like the pledge of heavenly prosperity for his descendants. Now we read in the book of Genesis that the patriarch Isaac, before giving this solemn blessing to his son Jacob, kissed him, and smelling the perfume of his garments cried out in joy: "Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed," *Ecce odor filii mei sicut odor agri pleni, cui benedixit Dominus.* And immediately, carried out of himself, he called down on his son's head the richest blessings from

[69] Ibid. xvii, 9. [70] Gal. ii, 20. [71] Matth. xi, 29.
[72] Luc. ii, 51. [73] Matth. xxii, 21. [74] Luc. vi, 12.

on high: "God give thee the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn and wine. And let peoples serve thee, and tribes worship thee; be thou lord of thy brethren. . . . Cursed be he that curseth thee; and let him that blesseth thee be filled with blessings!"[75]

This scene is an image of the delight the Father has in contemplating the humanity of His Son Jesus, and of the spiritual blessings He sheds on those united to Him. Like a field enamelled with flowers, the soul of Christ is decked with every virtue that can embellish human nature. God is infinite. As such, His exigencies are infinite; and yet the least action of Jesus was the object of His Father's complacency. When Christ Jesus worked in the humble workshop at Nazareth, when He conversed with men or sat at meat with His disciples—things apparently so simple—His Father looked upon Him and said: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased": *Hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi complacui.*[76] And He adds: "Hear ye Him", *Ipsum audite*, that is to say, contemplate Him in order to imitate Him: He is your Model, follow Him: He is the Way and no one cometh to Me but by Him, no one has a share in My blessings but in Him,[77] for I have given Him the fulness of them, as I have given Him the nations of the earth for His inheritance.[78] Why does the heavenly Father take this infinite delight in Jesus? Because Christ accomplished everything perfectly, and His actions were the expression of the most sublime virtues; but especially because all the actions of Christ, whilst being in themselves human actions, were divine in their principle.

O Christ Jesus, full of grace and Model of every virtue, beloved Son in Whom the Father is well pleased, be the one object of my contemplation and love. May I regard all passings things "as dung"[79] so as to place my joy in Thee alone; may I seek to imitate Thee so as to be, by Thee and with Thee, pleasing to Thy Father in all things!

IV

When we read the Gospel of St. John, we notice the insistency with which Jesus repeats: "My doctrine is not Mine";[80] "The Son cannot do anything of Himself";[81] "I cannot of Myself do anything";[82] "I do nothing of Myself".[83]

Is this to say that Christ had neither human intelligence, nor will nor

[75] Gen. xxvii, 27. [76] Matth. iii, 17.
[77] *Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi benedixit nos in omni benedictone spirituali . . . in Christo.* Ephes. i, 3.
[78] Ps. ii, 8. [79] Phillip. iii, 8. [80] Joan. vii, 16.
[81] Joan. v, 19. [82] Ibid. v, 30. [83] Ibid. viii, 28.

activity? In no wise; it would be heresy to think so; but the humanity of Jesus, being hypostatically united[84] to the Word, there was not in Christ a human Person to which His faculties could be attached, there was in Him only one Person, that of the Word doing all in union with the Father; all was in the most absolute dependence on the Divinity, all His activity emanated from the one Person that was in Him, that of the Word. This activity, although immediately exercised by the human nature, was divine in its root, in its principle; and therefore the Father received from it infinite glory and found in it utmost delight.

Can we imitate this? Yes, since by sanctifying grace, we share in the divine filiation of Jesus; by this, our activity is enhanced and as it were made divine in its principle. It goes without saying that in the order of *being*, we always keep our own personality; we always remain, by nature, purely human creatures; our union with God by grace, however close and intimate it may be, remains an accidental not a substantial union. But it is so much the greater in as far as the autonomy of our personality, in the order of activity, is effaced before the Divinity.

If we wish nothing to interpose between us and God, nothing to hinder our union with Him, if we wish Divine blessings to flow in upon our souls, we must not only renounce sin and imperfection, but moreover despoil ourselves of our personality *in so far as it constitutes an obstacle to perfect union with God.* It constitutes an obstacle to perfect union when our judgment, our self-will, our self-love, our susceptibilities, make us think and act otherwise than according to the desires of our Heavenly Father. Believe me, our faults of frailty, our miseries, our human limitations, hinder our union with God infinitely less than that habitual attitude of the soul which, so to speak, wills to keep in everything the proprietorship of its activity. We must therefore not annihilate our personality—which is neither possible nor yet willed by God—but bring it to an entire capitulation before God. We must lay it down at God's feet and ask Him to be by His Spirit—as He is for the humanity of Christ—the supreme mover of all our thoughts, of all our feelings, of all our words, of all our actions, of all our life.[85]

When a soul arrives at the state of having stripped itself of all sin, and all attachment to self and the creature; of having destroyed in itself, as far as possible, all purely natural and human springs of action in order to surrender itself completely to the Divine action; of living in absolute dependence of God, on His will, His commandments, on

[84] "Hypostatically" from a Greek word meaning: "by a personal union".

[85] *Omnis cogitatio nostra et intellectus et omnis sermo et omnis actus nostram quilem denegationem spirat, Christi autem testimonium atque confessionem.* Origen. Homil. 2 in 16 Matth.

the spirit of the Gospel; of referring everything to the Heavenly Father, then it can truly say: *Dominus regit me*;[86] "The Lord ruleth me; everything in me comes from Him, I am in His hands". This soul has attained to the perfect imitation of Christ to the point that its life is the very reproduction of that of Christ: *Vivo ego,* JAM NON EGO, *vivit vero in me Christus.*[87] God directs it; it is in everything, moved under divine impulsion: that is sanctity, the most perfect imitation of Christ in His *being,* in His *state* of Son of God, as in His primordial disposition of belonging altogether to His Father, in His person and in His *activity.*

Do not think it is presumption on our part to wish to attain so sublime an ideal: no, it is God's own desire; it is His eternal design for us: *Praedestinavit nos conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.*[88] The more we are conformed to His Son, the more the Father loves us, because we are more closely united to Him.[89] When He sees a soul fully transformed in His Son, He surrounds it with His special protection, the most tender cares of His providence; He showers His blessings upon it, He places no limit to the communication of His graces: that is the secret of God's extraordinary gifts.

Let us thank our Father in Heaven for having given us His Son, Christ Jesus, as our Model, so that we have only to look at Him to know what we have to do: *Ipsum audite.* Christ has told us: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." *Exemplum enim dedi vobis ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciatis.*[90] He has left us His example that we may walk in His footsteps: *Vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus.*[91] He is the only way we must follow: *Ego sum via*;[92] he who follows Him does not walk in the darkness, but comes to the light of life. That is the Model faith reveals to us, a transcendent and yet an accessible Model: *Inspice et fac secundum exemplar.*[93]

The soul of Our Lord contemplated at every moment the divine essence. With one and the same glance, His Soul saw the ideal conceived by God for humanity, and each of His actions was the expression of this ideal. Let us then lift up our eyes, let us love to know Christ Jesus more and more, to study His life in the Gospel, to follow His mysteries in the wonderful order established by the Church herself in her liturgical cycle from Advent to Pentecost; let us open the eyes of our faith and live in such a way as to reproduce in ourselves the features of this Exemplar, to conform our lives in accordance with His words and acts. This model is divine and visible and shows us God acting in

[86] Ps. xxii, 1. [87] Ps. ii, 20. [88] Rom. viii, 29.
[89] *Si imitatorem te praebeas Christi, appropinquasti Christo, et per Christum Deo.* St. Ambros. *In psalm* 118, *serm.* 22.
[90] Joan. xiii, 15. [91] I Petr. ii, 21. [92] Joan. xiv, 6. [93] Exod. xxv, 40.

the midst of us and sanctifying in His humanity all our actions, even the most ordinary; all our sentiments, even the most intimate; all our sufferings, even the deepest.

Let us contemplate this Model with faith. We are at times tempted to envy the contemporaries of Jesus, who were able to see Him, to follow Him and listen to Him. But faith renders Him also present to our souls with a presence not less efficacious for us. Christ has said Himself: Beati *qui non viderunt et crediderunt:* "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."[94] This was to make us understand that it is not less advantageous for us to live in contact with Jesus by faith than to have seen Him in the flesh. He, Whom we see living and acting when we read the Gospel or when we celebrate His mysteries, is the very Son of God. We have said everything when we have said of Christ: "Thou art the Son of the Living God", and that is the fundamental aspect of the Divine Model of our souls. Let us contemplate Him, not with an abstract contemplation, exterior, theoretic and cold, but with a contemplation full of love, attentive to grasp, in order to reproduce them in our lives, every feature of this Model and above all that fundamental and primordial disposition of Christ, of living for His Father. All His life was resumed in this disposition; all the virtues of Christ are the effect of this orientation of His Soul towards the Father, and this orientation is itself only the fruit of that ineffable union by which, in Jesus, all humanity is drawn into that Divine impulse which draws the Son towards His Father.

It is this which properly constitutes the Christian: first of all to share *by sanctifying grace*, in the Divine filiation of Christ: that is the imitation of Jesus in *His state* of Son of God; and next to reproduce *by our virtues* the characteristics of this unique archetype of perfection: that is the imitation of Jesus *in His works*. St. Paul points out this when he tells us we must form Christ in us,[95] put on Christ,[96] and bear in us the image of Christ.[97]

Christianus, alter Christus: "The Christian is another Christ." That is the true definition of a Christian given by tradition, if not in the same words, at least equivalently. "Another Christ", because the Christian is first of all, by grace, a child of the heavenly Father and brother of Christ here below in order to be His co-heir above; "another Christ", because all his activity—thoughts, desires, actions—plunges its root in this grace, to be exercised according to the thoughts, desires, sentiments of Jesus, and in conformity with the actions of Jesus: *Hoc enim sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu.*[98]

[94] Joan. xx, 29. [95] Gal. iv, 19. [96] Rom. xiii, 14. [97] I Cor. xv, 49. [98] Philip. ii, 5.

III. CHRIST, THE AUTHOR OF OUR REDEMPTION AND INFINITE TREASURY OF GRACE

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SUMMARY. Christ, by His satisfactions, merits for us the grace of Divine sonship. I. Impossibility for the human race, issued from *Adam,* to regain the eternal inheritance lost by his sin; only a *God* made *Man* can make *fully adequate satisfaction.* II. *Jesus, Saviour; the infinite value of every act* of the Incarnate Word. However, *the Redemption* was, in fact, only effected *by the sacrifice of the Cross.* III. Christ *merits* not only for himself but *for us.* This merit is founded upon the grace of Christ *constituted the Head of the human race;* and upon the *supreme liberty and ineffable love* with which He undergoes His Passion *for all mankind.* IV. *Infinite efficacy* of Christ's satisfactions and merits, the *boundless confidence* to which they ought to give birth. V. *Christ* now unceasingly *pleads* with His Father *for us. Our weakness entitles us to heavenly mercy;* how *we glorify God* by placing our reliance on the satisfactions of His Son.

THE imitation of Christ Jesus in His Being of grace and in His virtues is the substance of holiness for us. That is what I have tried to point out in the preceding conference. In order to help you to know better the One we have to imitate, I have sought to place before the eyes of your souls our Divine Model: Christ Jesus, true God and true Man. Doubtless, the contemplation of Our Lord, so adorable in His Person, so admirable in His life, and actions, makes your hearts glow with ardent desire to be able to resemble Him and unite yourselves to Him.

But can we, being but creatures, hope to reproduce within us the features of the Incarnate Word, and to share His life? Can we find strength to follow this one and only way that leads to the Father? Yes. Revelation tells us we can find this strength in the grace that the satisfactions of Christ have merited for us.

Our God does all things with wisdom. Furthermore, He is Infinite Wisdom. His eternal and ineffable design being to make us conform-

able to the image of His Son, we may be sure that to this end He has subordinated means of infallible power. Not only can we expect the realization of the Divine ideal in us, but God Himself invites us to do so. *Praedestinavit nos conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.* He wills that we should reproduce in our souls, although we can only do this in a limited measure, the features of His beloved Son. To desire to reproduce this ideal is neither pride nor presumption, but a response to God's own desire: *Ipsum audite.* All we have to do is to use the means He has Himself fixed.

Christ is not only the one and universal Model of all perfection, He is also, as I have said, the satisfactory, meritorious and efficient cause of our santification. Christ is, for us, the source of grace, because having paid all our debt to divine justice by His life, passion and death, He has merited to distribute all grace to us: *Causa satisfactoria et meritoria.*

Let us examine this consoling truth. We shall see in the next conference how Christ Jesus is the efficient cause of our sanctity.

I

What are we to understand when we say Christ is the satisfactory and meritorious cause of our salvation and sanctification?

As you know, God in creating the first man established him in justice and grace and made him His child and heir. But the divine plan was crossed by sin; Adam, the head of his race, prevaricated. In one moment, he lost for himself and his descendants all right to the divine life and inheritance. All the children of Adam, having become slaves of the devil,[1] share in his disgrace. That is why St. Paul says they are born "enemies of God",[2] "objects of wrath",[3] and for this reason excluded from eternal beatitude.[4]

Is no one to be found, among the sons of Adam, to redeem his brethren, and take away the curse that weighs upon them all? No—for all have sinned in Adam; none, either for himself or others, can make adequate satisfaction.

Sin is an injury done to God, an injury that must be expiated; man, being a mere creature, is incapable, of himself, of worthily paying the debt that has been contracted towards the divine Majesty by a sin of which the malice is infinite. Satisfaction, in order to be adequate, must be made by one equal in dignity to him against whom the offence

[1] Acts. xxvi, 18; Joan. xii, 31: Col. i, 14.
[2] Rom. v, 10; xi, 28.
[3] I Thess. i, 10; Rom. ii, 5, 8; Ephes. ii, 3.
[4] Rom. II, 2; v, 15-18.

was committed. The gravity of an injury is measured according to the dignity of the offended person. An injury done to a prince assumes greater gravity on account of his rank, than the same injury done to a peasant.[5] As regards satisfaction, the principle must be reversed. The greatness of the reparation is measured not according to the dignity of the one who receives it, but of the one who makes it. The same king receives the homage of a peasant and a prince; it is evident that the prince's homage outweighs that of the peasant.

Not between us and God lies infinity. Must humanity then despair? Is the outrage done to God ever to be repaired? Is man never to regain possession of the eternal inheritance? God alone can answer us, God alone can give a solution to this agonizing problem.

You know what God's response was, and the solution, full at once of mercy and justice, that He supplied. In His unfathomable designs, He decreed that the redemption of humanity should only be effected by a satisfaction equal to the rights of His infinite justice, and that this satisfaction should be made by the bloody sacrifice of a victim, volutarily substituted for sinful humanity. Who will this victim be? Who this Saviour? *Tu es qui venturus es?*[6] God promised Him immediately after Adam's fall, but thousands of years pass before He comes; thousands of years during which humanity lifts supplicating hands from the depths of a nameless abyss whence it is powerless to raise itself; thousands of years during which it adds sacrifice upon sacrifice, holocaust upon holocaust, to free itself from servitude.

But "when the fulness of time" comes, God sends the promised Saviour, the Saviour Who is to redeem creation, destroy sin, and reconcile man to God. Who is He? He is the Son of God made Man.

Being man, issued from Adam's race, He is able to substitute Himself voluntarily for all His brethren, and make Himself the surety for their sin; freely accepting to suffer and expiate in His flesh, He will be capable of meriting; being God, His merit will have infinite value, the satisfaction will be adequate, the reparation complete. St. Thomas says there is no full satisfaction if it is not infinite in value, that is to say, if it is not one that only a God could accomplish.[7] In the same way that the order of justice requires the punishment to correspond to to the fault, it seems to require also, says St. Thomas, that he who has

[5] *Peccatum contra Deum commissum infinitatem habet ex infinitate divinae majestatis; tanto enim offensa est major quanto major est ille in quem delinquitur.* St. Thom. III, q. i, a. 2, ad. 2; cf. I-II, q. lxxxvii, a. 4.

[6] Matth. xi, 3.

[7] St. Thom. III, q. i, a. 2, ad. 2.

committed the fault should satisfy for it, and that is why it was necessary to take from that nature, which had been corrupted by sin, what was to be offered in satisfaction for this nature.[8]

Such is the solution God Himself gives; He could have given others, but it is this one which it has pleased His Wisdom, Power and Goodness to give us; it is this one that we must hence contemplate and adore. For it is a wonderful solution. "The humanity of Christ", says St. Gregory, "permitted Him to die and make satisfaction for men; His Divinity gave Him power to restore to us the grace that sanctifies".[9] Death had come forth from human nature stained by sin; it was from a human nature united to a God that the source of grace and life was to spring forth. *Ut unde mors oriebatur inde vita resurgeret.*[10]

II

"When", says St. Paul, "the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son made of a woman that He might redeem them who were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons": *At ubi venit plenitudo temporis misit Deus Filium suum ut eos qui sub lege erant redimeret, ut adoptionem filiorum reciperemus.*[11] To redeem humanity from sin and restore to it the grace of Divine adoption, such is in fact the fundamental mission of the Incarnate Word, the work which Christ comes to accomplish here below.

His Name, the Name of Jesus, given by God Himself, is not without signification: *Jesus nomen vanum aut inane non portat.*[12] This Name signifies His special mission of salvation and denotes His special work: the Redemption of the world. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus", says the angel sent to St. Joseph, "for He shall *save* His people from their sins".[13]

Let us contemplate Him at this solemn moment, unique in the history of humanity. What does he say? What is it that He does? *Ingrediens mundum dicit: Hostiam et oblationem noluisti, corpus autem aptasti mihi; holocautomata pro peccato non tibi placuerunt; tunc dixi: ecce venio . . .*[14] "When He cometh into the world He saith: (to His Father) Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come". These words taken from St. Paul, reveal to us the very first movement of the Heart of Christ at the moment

[8] Ibid. q. iv, a. 6.
[9] *Moralia*, xvii, c. 30, n. 46.
[10] "Preface" of Passiontide.
[11] Gal. iv, 4-5.
[12] St. Bernard, *Serm. I. de Circumcis.*
[13] Matth. i, 21.
[14] Hebr. x, 5-7; cf. Ps. xxxiv, 7-8.

of His Incarnation. And having made this initial act of total oblation, Christ "hath rejoiced as a giant to run His course": *Exsultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam.*[15]

As a giant, for He is a Man-God; and all His actions, all His works, are those of a God, and, in consequence, worthy of God to Whom He offers them in homage.

According to the language of philosophy, "the acts belong to the person": *Actiones sunt suppositorum.* The different actions we perform have their source in human nature and in the faculties derived from this nature; but in the last analysis, we attribute them to the person who possesses this nature and employs his faculties. Thus, it is with the intelligence I think; with the eye, I see; with the ear, I hear; to see, hear, and understand are the actions of human nature; but we refer them finally to the person: it is *I*, the same I, who see, hear, and think; although each of these actions has its immediate source in a different faculty, they are due to one and the same person who possesses the nature endowed with these faculties.

Now in Jesus Christ, human nature, perfect and integral in itself, is united to the Person of the Son of God. Many of Christ's actions could only be wrought in His human nature: if He works, walks, sleeps, eats, if He teaches, suffers and dies, it is in His humanity, through His human nature; but all His actions belong to the Divine Person to Whom this humanity is united. It is a Divine Person *Who* acts and operates *by* human nature.

It results from this that all the actions accomplished by the humanity of Christ, however small, ordinary, simple or limited they may be in their physical reality and earthly duration, are attributed to the Divine Person to Whom this humanity is joined; they are the actions of a God.[16] On this head, they possess transcendent beauty and splendour; they acquire, from a moral point of view, an inestimable price, infinite value and inexhaustible efficacy. The moral value of Christ's human actions is measured by the infinite dignity of the Divine Person in Whom the human nature subsists and acts.

If this is true of the least action of Christ, how much truer yet is it of those that constitute, properly speaking, His mission here below, or are connected with it: namely, the voluntary substitution of Himself for us, as a stainless Victim to pay our debt and, by His expiation and the satisfaction He made, restore Divine Life to us.

For such is the mission He is to fulfil, the course He is to run. "God has laid on Him", a man like us, of Adam's race, yet just,

[15] Ps. xviii, 6.

[16] Theology calls them *theandric*, from two Greek words, meaning *God* and *man*.

innocent and stainless, "the iniquity of us all". *Posuit in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum.*[17] Because He has become, as it were, partaker of our nature, and has taken upon Himself our sin, Christ has merited to make us partakers of His justice and holiness. "God", according to the energetic expression of St. Paul, "sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh." *Deus Filium suum mittens in similitudinem carnis peccati, et de peccato damnavit peccatum in carne;*[18] and with yet more astounding energy: "Him, that knew no sin, for us He hath made sin". *Eum qui non noverat peccatum, pro nobis peccatum fecit.*[19] What energy there is in this expression: *peccatum fecit!* The Apostle does not say: *peccator,* "sinner", but even, *peccatum,* "sin".

Christ, on His side, accepted to take upon Himself all our sins, to the point of becoming in some manner, upon the Cross, universal sin, living sin; He has voluntarily put Himself in our place, and therefore death will strike Him. He has purchased us "with His own Blood".[20] Humanity is to be redeemed, "not with corruptible things as gold or silver . . . but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world".[21]

Let us not forget that we have been "bought with a great price".[22] Jesus Christ shed the last drop of His Blood for us. It is true to say that a single drop of this Divine Blood would have sufficed to redeem us; the least suffering, the slightest humiliation of Christ, even a single desire of His Heart would have been enough to expiate every sin, all the crimes that could be committed; for each of Christ's actions, being the action of a Divine Person, constitutes a satisfaction of infinite price. But God willed to make the immense love His Son bears towards Him shine forth the more in the eyes of the world: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem.*[23] He willed to show the ineffable charity of this same Son towards us: *Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet;*[24] to bring home to us more vividly how infinite is the Divine holiness, and how profound the malice of sin. For these and other reasons not revealed to us,[25] the Eternal Father has required all the sufferings and the Passion and Death of His Divine Son in expiation of the crimes of humanity. Indeed, the satisfaction was only complete, when, from the height of the Cross, Jesus with His dying voice pronounced the

[17] Isa. liii, 6. [18] Rom. viii, 3. [19] II Cor. v, 21. [20] Act. xx, 25.
[21] I Petr. i, 18-20. [22] I Cor. vi, 20. [23] Joan. xiv, 31. [24] Ibid. xv, 13.
[25] The Redemption is a mystery of faith; we can understand in some measure its admirable appropriateness after it has been revealed to us, but in its essence it remains hidden for us. This is what St. Paul calls the *Sacramentum absconditum.* Ephes. i, 9; iii, 3; Col. i, 26.

Consummatum est. "All is consummated." Then only, the personal mission of the Redeemer here below was fulfilled, and His work of salvation accomplished.

III

By these satisfactions, as, moreover, by all the acts of His life, Jesus Christ *merited* for us every grace of pardon, of salvation and sanctification.

What, exactly, is merit? It is a *right* to a recompense.[26] When we say that the works of Christ are meritorious *for us,* we mean that by them Christ has won for us the right to eternal life and all the graces necessary for attaining it. It is indeed what St. Paul tells us: We are "justified freely by His grace, through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus".[27] Justified that is to say, rendered just in the eyes of God, not by our own works, but by a gratuitous gift of God, namely grace, which comes to us through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The Apostle makes us understand, then, that the Passion of Jesus, which achieves and crowns all the works of His earthly life, is the source from whence eternal life flows for us. Christ is the *meritorious cause* of our sanctification.

And what is the profound reason of this merit since all merit is personal? When we are in a state of grace we can merit for ourselves an increase of this grace, but we cannot merit grace for others. The most we can do is to implore it from God. How, then, could Jesus Christ merit for us? What is the fundamental reason why Jesus Christ can merit not only for Himself, for example, the glorification of His Humanity, but also eternal life for others, for us, for the whole human race?

Merit, the fruit and property of grace, has, if we may thus speak, the same extent as the grace upon which it is founded. Jesus Christ is filled with sanctifying grace, in virtue of which he can personally merit for Himself. But this grace in Jesus does not stop at Himself; it possesses not only a personal character, it enjoys the privilege of universality. Christ was predestined to become our Head, our Chief, our Representative. The Eternal Father wills to make of Him the *Primogenitus omnis creaturae,* the First-born of every creature. In consequence of this eternal predestination, the grace of Christ, Who is of our race

[26] We are speaking of merit in the sense of a strict and rigorous right, which is called in theology: *meritum de condigno.*

[27] Rom. iii, 24.

through the Incarnation, bears a character of eminence and universality, the end of which is no longer to sanctify the human soul of Jesus, but to make of Him, in the domain of eternal life, the Head of humanity.[28] Hence, a social character is attached to all the acts of Jesus, when they are considered in relation to the human race; all that Christ does, He does not only for us, but in our nature. That is why St. Paul tells us that if "by the disobedience of one man (Adam) many were made sinners; so also, by the obedience of one, many shall be made just".[29] Jesus Christ then, in His quality of Head, has merited for us all, in the same way as in substituting Himself for us, He has satisfied for us. And as He Who has merited for us is God, His merits have infinite value and an inexhaustible efficacy.[30]

That which completes the work of giving all beauty and fulness to the satisfactions and merits of Christ, is that He accepted His sufferings voluntarily and from love. Liberty is an esssential element of merit, for the act is only worthy of praise if the one who accomplishes it is responsible: *Ubi non est libertas, nec meritum,* says St. Bernard.[31]

This liberty covers the whole redeeming mission of Jesus. As Man-God, Christ accepted absolutely, to suffer in His passible Body. When on His entrance into this world He said to His Father: "Behold I come", *Ecce venio, ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam,* He foresaw all the humiliations, all the sufferings of His Passion and Death, and freely, from the depth of His Heart, out of love for His Father and for us; He accepted all: *Volui,* "I have willed". *Et legem tuam in medio cordis mei.*[32]

Christ keeps intact this willingness to suffer, throughout His whole life. The hour of His sacrifice is always present to Him; He awaits it with impatience: He calls it "His hour"[33] as if it were the only one that counted for Him in His earthly existence. He announces His Death to His disciples, He traces out its details to them in advance, in such clear terms that they cannot be deceived. When St. Peter, deeply moved at the thought of seeing his Master die, wishes to set himself in opposition to the realization of these sufferings, Jesus rebukes him: "Thou savourest not the things that are of God."[34] But for Himself "He knows His Father", and through love for Him and charity for

[28] This is what is called in theology *Gratia capitis.* Cf. Thom. III, q. xlviii, a. i.

[29] Rom. v, 19.

[30] It goes without saying that Christ's merits must be applied to us in order that we should experience their efficacy. Baptism inaugurates this efficacy; by Baptism we are incorporated with Christ, we become living members of His mystical body: the bond is established between the Head and the members; once justified by Baptism, we, in our turn, can merit.

[31] *Serm. I. in Cant.*

[32] Ps. xxxix, 8-9, and Hebr. x, 9.

[33] Joan. xiii, 1.

[34] Marc. viii, 31-33.

us, He goes to meet His Passion with all the ardour of His holy soul, but likewise with a sovereign liberty. His will is aglow with love, so that it burns in Him like a furnace: "I am come to cast fire upon the earth and what will I but that it be kindled? I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized", a baptism of blood,[35] and yet no man has the power to take away His life; He lays it down of Himself.[36] See how He manifests the truth of these words. One day, the inhabitants of Nazareth want to cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill: Jesus passes through the midst of them with wonderful calmness.[37] Another time, at Jerusalem, the Jews attempt to stone Him, because He affirms His Divinity; He hides Himself and goes out of the temple:[38] His hour is not yet come.

But when it does come, He yields Himself to them. See Him in the Garden of Olives on the eve of His death; the armed troops advance to take Him and lead Him to be condemned. "Whom seek ye?" He asks them. At their reply: "Jesus of Nazareth," He says to them simply: "I am He." This one word uttered by Him is enough to overthrow His enemies and make them fall to the ground. He could have kept them there; He could, as He said Himself, ask His Father, and He would send legions of angels to deliver Him.[39] It is at this moment that He reminds these men that every day He sat with them in the temple and they did not lay hands on Him; the hour was not come, that is why He did not give them licence to seize Him. Now the hour has struck when, for the salvation of the world, He is about to deliver Himself up to His executioners, who only act as the instruments of the powers of hell: *Haec est hora vestra et potestas tenebrarum.*[40] The soldiery lead Him from tribunal to tribunal, He does not resist. However, before the Sanhedrin, the supreme tribunal of the Jews, He proclaims His rights as Son of God, then He abandons Himself to the fury of His enemies, until the moment when He consummates His sacrifice upon the Cross.

It is truly because He has willed it, that He is delivered to death: *Oblatus est* QUIA IPSE *voluit.*[41] In this voluntary surrender of His entire self upon the Cross; by this death of the Man-God; by this immolation of a stainless victim, offering Himself through love and with absolute liberty—infinite satisfaction is paid to Divine Justice for us,[42] inexhaustible merit is gained for us by Christ, while eternal life is restored to humanity. *Et consummatus, factus est omnibus obtemperantibus sibi causa salutis aeternae.*[43] "And being consummated, He became

[35] Luc. xii, 50. [36] Joan. x, 18. [37] Luc. iv, 30. [38] Joan. viii, 59.
[39] Matth. xxvi, 53. [40] Luc. xxii, 53. [41] Isa. liii, 7.
[42] *In morte Christi facta est consummatio eorum quae exigebantur ad satisfactionem.* St. Thom. 3. *Sent dist.* xxi, q. 2, a. 1, ad. 3 and 4. [43] Hebr. v, 9.

to all that obey Him *the (meritorious) cause of eternal salvation.*" Thus St. Paul could also say that in virtue of this will, we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once offered. *In qua voluntate sanctificati sumus per oblationem corporis Jesu Christi semel.*[44]

It is for us all, for each one of us, that Our Lord died: *Pro omnibus mortuus est Christus.*[45] Christ has become the propitiation not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world: *Ipse est propitiato pro peccatis nostris; non pro nostris autem tantum, sed etiam pro totius mundi,*[46] so that He is the one Mediator between men and God: *Unus mediator Dei et hominum, homo Christus Jesus.*[47]

When we study the Divine plan, above all when we do so in the light of the Epistles of St. Paul, we see that God wills that we should seek our salvation and our sanctification only in the Blood of His Son; there is no other Redeemer. "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved",[48] for His death is supremely efficacious: *Una oblatione* CONSUMMAVIT IN SEMPITERNUM *sanctificatos.*[49] The Will of the Father is that His Son Jesus, after having substituted Himself for all humanity in His bitter Passion, should be established Head of all the elect whom He has saved by His sacrifice and death.

This is why the song that redeemed humanity will sing in heaven is one of praise and thanksgiving to Christ: *Redemisti nos in sanguine tuo ex omni tribu, et lingua, et populo, et natione.*[50]

When we shall have entered into a blessed eternity, and are united to the choir of the saints, we shall contemplate Our Lord and shall say to Him: Thou hast redeemed us by Thy precious Blood; by the grace of Thy Passion, Thy sacrifice upon the Cross, Thy satisfaction and merits, we are saved from eternal damnation; O Christ Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, to Thee be "benediction and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever".[51]

IV

It is above all in their fruits that the Passion and Death of Our Divine Saviour are efficacious.

St. Paul does not weary of enumerating the benefits we gain from the infinite merits acquired by the Man-God in His Life and sufferings.

[44] Ibid. x, 10. [45] II Cor. v, 15. [46] I Joan. ii, 2. [47] I Tim. ii, 5.
[48] Act. iv, 12. [49] Hebr. x, 14. [50] Apoc. v, 9. [51] Ibid. v, 11-12.

When he speaks of them, the great Apostle exults; he can find no other terms to express his thought than those of *abundance,* of *superabundance* of *riches* that he declares *unfathomable.*[52] The Death of Christ redeems us, gives us access to the Father, and reconciles us with Him, justifies us and bestows holiness and the new life of Christ upon us. To sum up, the Apostle compares Christ to Adam whose work he has come to repair; Adam brought us sin, condemnation and death; Christ, the second Adam, restores to us justice, grace and life.[53] *Translati de morte ad vitam;*[54] the redemption was abundant: *Copiosa apud eum redemptio.*[55] "But not as the offence, so also the gift (the gratuitous gift of grace) . . . For if by one man's offence death reigned through one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ. . . . And where sin abounded, grace did more abound."[56]

That is why "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"[57]

Our Lord, in offering to His Father in our name, a satisfaction of infinite value, destroyed the obstacle that existed between man and God: the Eternal Father now regards with love the human race redeemed by the Blood of His Son; for His Son's sake He has poured upon it all the grace it needs to unite itself to Him, to live for God, and of the very life of God. *Ad serviendum Deo* VIVENTI.[58]

Thus, every supernatural good given to us, all the lights God lavishes on us, all the helps with which he surrounds our spiritual life, are bestowed on us in virtue of the life, passion, and death of Christ; all the graces of pardon, justification, perseverance God gives and ever will give to souls in all ages have their one source in the Cross.

Truly, if "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son";[59] if He "hath delivered us from the powers of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sin";[60] if, as St. Paul again says: Christ "hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us",[61] for each one of us, to testify the love He bears to His brethren; if He has given Himself to redeem us from all iniquity and "cleanse to Himself a people acceptable",[62] why do we still hesitate in our faith and confidence in Jesus Christ? He has expiated all, paid

[52] Rom. v, 17, sq.; I Cor. i, 6-7; Ephes. i, 7-8, 18, 19; ii, 17; iii, 18; Col. 127; ii, 2; Philip. iv, 19; I Tim. i, 14; Tit. iii, 6.
[53] I Cor. xv, 22. [54] I Joan. iii, 14. [55] Ps. cxxix, 7. [56] Rom. v, 15-20.
[57] Ibid. viii, 1. [58] Hebr. ix, 14. [59] Joan. iii, 16. [60] Col. i, 13-14.
[61] Ephes. v, 2. [62] Tit. ii, 14.

all, merited all, and His merits are ours: we have been "made rich in Him", so that if we will it, "nothing is wanting to us in any grace of holiness". *Divites facti estis in illo, ita ut* NIHIL *vobis desit in* ULLA *gratia.*[63]

Why then is it that pusillanimous souls are to be found who say that holiness is not for them, that perfection is something beyond their power, who say, when one speaks to them of perfection: "It is not for me; I could never arrive at sanctity." Do you know what makes them speak thus? It is their lack of faith in the efficacy of Christ's merits. For it is the will of God that all should be holy: *Haec est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.*[64] It is the Lord's precept: "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect".[65] But we too often forget the Divine Plan; we forget that holiness for us is a supernatural holiness, of which the only source is in Jesus Christ, our Chief and our Head; we do a wrong to the infinite merits and inexhaustible satisfactions of Christ. Doubtless, by ourselves, we can do nothing in the way of grace or perfection; Our Lord expressly tells us so. *Sine Me* NIHIL *potestis facere,* [66] and St. Augustine, commenting on this text, adds: *Sive parum, sive multum, sine illo fieri non potest sine quo nihil fieri potest.*[67] That is so true! Whether it concerns great things or small, we can do nothing without Christ. But by dying for us, Christ has given us free and confident access to the Father,[68] and through Him there is no grace, for which we cannot hope.

Souls of little faith! Why do we doubt of God, of our God?

V

It is true that now Christ merits no longer (merit being only possible up to the instant of death), but His acquired merits and satisfaction remain to us. For this High Priest, because He is eternal, possesses an everlasting priesthood "whereby He is able also to save for ever them that come to God by Him".[69]

St. Paul particularly insists on showing that Christ, in Heaven, now intercedes for us, in His quality of supreme high priest. Jesus has ascended to Heaven as our forerunner. *Praecursor* PRO NOBIS *introivit Jesus.*[70] If He is seated at the right hand of His Father it is that He may henceforth plead for us. *Ut appareat* NUNC *vultui Dei* PRO

[63] I Cor. i, 5-7.
[64] I Thess. iv, 3.
[65] Matth. v, 48.
[66] Joan. xv, 5.
[67] *Tract in Joan.* lxxxi, 3.
[68] Ephes. ii, 18; iii, 12.
[69] Hebr. vii, 24-25.
[70] Ibid. vi, 20.

NOBIS;[71] "always living to make intercession for us". SEMPER VIVIENS *ad interpellandum* PRO NOBIS.[72]

Because He is our Head, Christ shows without ceasing the marks of His Wounds to His Father for us; He causes all His merits to be of avail for us: and because He is always worthy of being heard by His Father, His prayer is always granted: *Pater, sciebam quia semper me audis.*[73] What unlimited confidence ought we not to have in such a High Priest, Who is the Beloved Son of His Father, and is constituted by Him our Chief and Head, Who gives us a share in all His merits, in all His satisfactions![74]

It sometimes happens, when we groan beneath the weight of our miseries and sins, that we say with the Apostle: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Hear the reply of St. Paul: *Gratia Dei per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.*[75] "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord." We find in Jesus Christ all that is needful to be victorious here below, while awaiting the final triumph in glory.

If we could only have a deep conviction that we are powerless without Christ, and that we have all in Him! *Quomodo non etiam cum illo* OMNIA *nobis donavit?*[76] Of ourselves we are weak, very weak; in the world of souls there are weaknesses of all kinds, but that is not a reason for being discouraged; these miseries, when they are not wilful, rather entitle us to Christ's mercy. See the unfortunate who wish to excite the pity of those from whom they ask alms; far from hiding their poverty, they make a display of their rags, they show their sores; that is what entitles them to the charity and compassion of the passers-by. For us also, as for the sick who were brought to Christ when He lived in Judea, it is our misery confessed and displayed in His sight that draws down His mercy. St. Paul tells us that Christ willed to experience our infirmities—excepting sin—that He might have compassion on us; and in fact we read several times in the Gospel that Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of the sufferings He witnessed: *Misericordia motus.*[77] St. Paul expressly adds that Jesus keeps this sentiment of compassion in glory, and he immediately concludes: "Let us go therefore with confidence, *cum fiducia,* to the

[71] Ibid. ix, 24.

[72] Ibid. vii, 25. St. Paul uses the same expression in his Epistle to the Romans (viii, 32) whence we should understand that our confidence must be unlimited: "Hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?"

[73] Joan. xi, 42.

[74] *Caput et membra sunt quasi una persona mystica et ideo satisfactio, Christi ad omnes fideles pertinet sicut ad sua membra.* St. Thom. III, q. xlviii, a. 2, ad. 1.

[75] Rom. vii, 25. [76] Ibid. viii, 32.

[77] Luc. vii, 13; Marc. viii, 2; cf. Matth. xv, 32.

throne" of Him Who is the source "of grace"; for if we do so in these dispositions, we shall "obtain mercy".[78]

Besides, to act thus is to glorify God, it is to render Him very acceptable homage. Why so? Because the Divine ideal is that we should find *all* in Christ, and when we humbly acknowledge our weakness and lean on His strength, the Father regards us with benevolence, and with joy, because by this we proclaim that His Son Jesus is the one Mediator Whom He has willed to give to the world.

See how convinced the great Apostle was of his truth. In one of his Epistles, after having published his misery and what struggles he has to sustain in his soul, he cries out: *Libenter gloriabor in infirmitatibus meis.*[79] Instead of complaining because of his infirmities, his weaknesses and struggles, he "glories" in them. This seems strange, does it not? But he gives a profound reason for it. And what is this reason? *Ut inhabitet in me virtus Christi.*[80] So that it may not be my strength, but the strength of Christ, the grace of Christ that dwells in me and causes me to triumph, and that all glory may be rendered to Him alone.

And see again how far St. Paul goes when he speaks of our weakness: *Non quod sufficientes simus cogitare aliquid a nobis quasi ex nobis;*[81] he goes so far as to say that we cannot even have a good thought, a thought worth anything for heaven, of ourselves: *Quasi ex nobis;* and he was inspired by God when he wrote these words. All that is good in us, all that is meritorious for eternal life comes from God through Christ: *Sufficientia nostra ex Deo est.*[82] It is God Who enables us to act, and not only to act but even to will, in a supernatural manner: *Deus est enim qui operatur in nobis et velle et perficere, pro bona voluntate,*[83] according to His good will, for such is His good pleasure.

So we see that of ourselves we can neither will, nor act, nor pray supernaturally: *Sine me* NIHIL *potestis facere.*

Are we to be pitied for this? In no wise. St. Paul, after having detailed our weakness, adds: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.*[84] "I can do all things." *Omnia,* not of myself, but "in Him Who strengtheneth me", so that all glory may be given to Christ, Who has merited all, and in Whom we have all things. There is no obstacle that I cannot sumount, no difficulty I cannot support, no temptation I cannot resist, through the grace Jesus Christ has merited for me. In Him, through Him, I can do all things , because His triumph is to render strong what is weak: *Sufficit tibi gratia mea, nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur.*[85] By this, God wills that all glory should ascend

[78] Hebr. iv, 14-16. [79] II Cor. xii, 9. [80] II Cor. xii, 9. [81] Ibid. iii, 5.
[82] Ibid. [83] Phillip. ii, 13. [84] Ibid. iv, 13. [85] II Cor. xii, 9.

to Him by Christ, Whose grace triumphs in our weakness: *In laudem* GLORIAE *gratiae suae.*[86]

At the last day, when we shall appear before God, we shall not be able to say to Him: "My God, I have had to surmount too great difficulties; to triumph over them was impossible; my many sins have discouraged me." For God would reply: "That would have been true if you had been alone; but I gave you My Son, Jesus; He has expiated and paid for all; in His sacrifice there are all the satisfactions which it was My right to demand for all the sins of the world; He merited everything for you by His Death; He has been your redemption, and He has merited to be your justification, your wisdom, your sanctity. In My Divine designs, He is not only your salvation, but the source of your strength: for all His satisfactions, all His merits, all His riches—and they are infinite—were yours from Baptism, and since He is seated at My right hand, He has offered for you unceasingly all the fruits of His sacrifice; you should have leaned on Him, for, in Him, I would have given you a super-abundance of strength to overcome all evil, as He Himself prayed: *Rogo ut serves eos a malo;*[87] and I would have filled you with every good, for it is for you, not for Himself, that He ever makes intercession."[88]

Oh! if we knew the infinite value of the gift of God! *Si scires donum Dei!* If, above all, we had faith in the immense merits of Jesus, a lively, practical faith, which would fill us with an invincible confidence in prayer, with abandonment in the needs of our soul! With the Church who, in her liturgy, repeats this formula each time she addresses a prayer to God, we should ask nothing except in His Name, for this Mediator, always living, reigns, God, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit: *Per Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum . . . qui tecum vivit et regnat.* For through Him, we are sure of obtaining all graces. When St. Paul exposes the Divine Plan, he says it is in Christ that "we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which hath superabounded in us".[89] We have at our disposal all the riches acquired by Jesus; through Baptism they have become ours. We have only to have recourse to Him to be like the spouse "that cometh up from the desert" of her poverty, but "flowing with delights" because she is "leaning upon her beloved": *Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum?*[90]

If only we lived by these truths! Our life would then be a continual hymn of praise, of thanksgiving to God for the inestimable gift He

[86] Ephes. i, 6. [87] Joan. xvii, 15. [88] Hebr. vii, 25.
[89] Ephes. i, 7. [90] Cant. viii, 5.

has made us of His Son, Jesus Christ: *Gratias Deo super inenarrabili dono ejus.*[91] We should thus enter fully, for the greatest good and most ardent joy of our souls, into the designs of God, Whose Will it is that we should find all in Jesus, and that receiving all from Him, we should render to Him and to His Father, in the unity of their Holy Spirit, all benediction, all honour, and all glory: *Sedenti in throno et Agno, benedictio, et honor, et gloria, et potestas, in saecula saeculorum.*[92]

[91] II Cor. ix, 15. [92] Apoc v, 13.

IV. CHRIST, THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF ALL GRACE

CAUSA EFFICIENS

SUMMARY. I. How, during Christ's earthly existence, His *humanity* as the *instrument of the Word was the source of grace* and life. II. How, since His Ascension, Christ exercises this efficiency. The official means: *the sacraments; they produce grace* of themselves, but in virtue of Christ's merits. III. *Universality* of the sacraments: they extend to all our supernatural life; the boundless confidence we ought to have in these *authentic sources*. IV. The *power of sanctification* that the Humanity of Jesus has outside the sacraments, *through the* spiritual *contact of faith*. Capital importance of this truth.

IT is still of the adorable Person of Our Lord we are going to speak. Never tire of hearing Him spoken of, never weary of it. No subject ought to be dearer to us and none can be more useful: we have everything in Christ, and without Him neither salvation nor sanctification is possible. The more we study the Divine Plan according to the Holy Scriptures, the more we see one great design stand out and dominate all things: This is that Christ Jesus, true God and true Man, is the centre of creation and redemption, that everything relates to Him, that through Him every grace is given to us and all glory rendered to His Father.

The contemplation of Our Lord is not only holy but sanctifying: even only to think of Him, to look at Him with faith and love, sanctifies us. For certain souls, the life of Christ Jesus is one subject of meditation among many others; this is not enough. Christ is not one of the means of spiritual life; He is *all* our spiritual life. The Father sees all in His Word, in His Christ; He finds all in Him. Although infinite glory and praise are due to Him, He finds them in His Son, in the least actions of His Son. Why should not Christ be equally our All, our Model, our Satisfaction, our Hope, our Substitute, our Light, our Strength, our Joy? This truth is so important that I want to insist upon it.

Spiritual life consists above all in contemplating Christ, so that we

may reproduce in ourselves His state of Son of God and His virtues. Those souls that constantly keep their eyes fixed on Christ see, in His light, all that in them is opposed to the expansion of the divine life; they then seek in Jesus the strength to put away these obstacles so as to please Him; they ask Him to be the support of their weakness, to give, and ever to increase in them, that fundamental disposition—in which lies all holiness—of always seeking to do that which is pleasing to His Father.

These souls enter fully into the Divine plan. They advance rapidly and surely along the way of perfection and holiness. They have neither the temptation to be discouraged when they fall through frailty—they know too well that of themselves they can do nothing: *Sine me nihil potestis facere,*[1]—nor the temptation to take the least pride in their progress, because they are convinced that if their personal efforts are necessary so as to correspond to grace, it is, however, to Christ Who dwells, lives and acts in them, that they owe their perfection. If they bear much fruit, it is not only because they abide in Christ by grace and the fidelity of their love, but likewise because Christ abides in them: *Qui manet in Me et ego in eo, hic fert fructum multum.*[2]

Christ indeed is not only a Model such as the artist contemplates when he paints a portrait; neither can we compare the imitation of Jesus Christ to that superficial imitation attained by some when they copy the actions and gestures of a great man they admire;—an imitation that does not reach the soul. Christ is more than a Model, more than a High Priest Who has obtained for us the grace to imitate Him; He Himself, by His Spirit, acts in the sanctuary of the soul to help us to imitate Him. Why is this? Because, as I said in speaking of the Divine plan, our holiness is of an essentially supernatural order; God is not content and never will be content, since He has resolved on making us His children, with a natural morality or religion; He wills us to act as children of a divine race. But it is through His Son, it is in His Son and by the grace His Son, Christ Jesus, has merited for us, that He gives us power to attain this holiness. All the holiness He has destined for each soul, God has placed in Christ, and it is of His fulness that we all must receive the graces which will make us holy. *Christus factus est nobis sapientia a Deo, et justitia, et sanctificatio et redemptio.*[3] If Christ possesses all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge[4] and holiness, it is that we may share in them. He came that we might have divine life in us and might have it in abundance: *Veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*[5] By His passion and death, He re-opened the source of divine life to all, but never forget that this

[1] Joan. xv, 5. [2] Ibid. [3] I Cor. i, 30. [4] Col. ii, 3. [5] Joan. x, 10.

source is in Him and not outside Him and that it is from Him it flows into us: grace, the principle of supernatural life, only comes through Him. That is why St. John writes: "He that hath the Son, hath life. He that hath not the Son, hath not life." *Qui habet Filium habet vitam, qui non habet Filium vitam non habet.*[6]

I

Let us contemplate Jesus during His earthly existence; we shall see how He is the efficient cause of all grace and the fountain of life. This contemplation is full of consolation, for it shows us how we may expect everything from Our Lord.

We see His holy humanity become the instrument which the divinity makes use of to shed around Him all grace and life.

Bodily life and health in the first place.

A leper comes to Jesus, asking to be cleansed; Christ puts forth His hand, touches him and says: "I will: be thou made clean", and immediately the leprosy departs.[7] Two blind men are brought to Him: Jesus touches their eyes saying: "According to your faith, be it done unto you", and their eyes are opened to the light.[8] Another day, they bring to Him one deaf and dumb, beseeching Christ to lay His hand upon him; then Jesus, drawing him apart from the multitude, puts His finger into the man's ears, touches his tongue with saliva, and looking up to heaven, sighs and says: "Be thou opened." Immediately this man hears, his tongue is loosed and he begins to speak distinctly.[9] Again see Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus: it is by His word that Christ calls back the dead to life.

In all these scenes we see the holy Humanity serve as an instrument for the Divinity. It is the Divine Person of the Word Who heals and raises from the dead, but to work these marvels the Word uses the human nature that is united to Him. Through His human nature, Christ speaks the words, and with His hands touches the sick; life therefore proceeded from the Divinity and through the humanity, reached the bodies and souls of men.[10] We understand the words of the Gospel, telling us that "the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him, and healed all": *Virtus de illo exibat.*[11]

Christ acts in a similar manner in the supernatural domain of grace;

[6] I Joan. v, 12. [7] Matth. viii, 2-3. [8] Ibid. ix, 27-29. [9] Marc. vii, 32, 35.
[10] To employ the theological term, the humanity served as the source of life in being the instrument united to the Word: *ut instrumentum conjunctum.*
[11] Luc. vi, 19.

it is by an action, a word or gesture of the human nature united to Him, that the Word forgives sins and justifies the sinner.

See Mary Magdalen coming in the midst of a feast to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears. Jesus says to her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee: thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace."[12] It is His Divinity that forgives sins, it alone can do so, but it is by a word that Jesus pronounces this forgiveness, His Humanity becoming the instrument of grace.

Another scene in the Gospel is yet more explicit. One day a paralytic man lying upon a bed is brought to Jesus. "Thy sins are forgiven thee", says Jesus. But the Pharisees who hear these words and do not believe in Christ's Divinity, murmur: "Who is this who speaketh blasphemies?" "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And Our Lord wishing to show them that He is God, answers: "Which is easier to say: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man (note the expression: Son of man; Our Lord uses it designedly, instead of: Son of God) hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house." And immediately this man, rising up before the multitude, takes up the bed on which he had been carried, and returns to his own house glorifying God.[13]

Thus Christ works miracles, forgives sins and distributes grace with sovereign liberty and power, because, being God, He is the fountain of all grace and all life, but He does this through His humanity; the humanity of Christ is "vivifying" on account of its union with the Divine Word.[14]

This likewise is what takes place in the passion and death of Jesus. It is in His human nature that Jesus suffers, expiates and merits: His humanity becomes the instrument of the Word, and these sufferings of the holy humanity work out our salvation, are the cause of our redemption and restore life to us.[15] We were dead in sin, but God has given us life together with Christ, and for Christ's sake, in forgiving our sins.[16] St. Thomas clearly tells us this.[17] At that moment

[12] Ibid. vii, 48-50. [13] Ibid. v, 18-25.

[14] *Carnem Domini vivificatricem esse dicimus quia facta est propria Verbi cuncta vivificare praevalentis.* Concil. Ephes. can. 11.

[15] *Actiones humanitatis ex virtute divinitatis fuerunt nobis salutiferae, utpote gratiam in nobis* CAUSANTES *et per meritum et* PER EFFICIENTIAM QUANDAM. St. Thom. III, q. viii, a. 1, ad. 1.

[16] Col. ii, 13.

[17] Let us quote this beautiful proposition of the angelic doctor: *Verbum prout in principio erat apud Deum vivificat animas sicut agens principale, caro tamen ejus et mysteria in ea patrata operantur instumentaliter ad animae vitam.* III, q. lxii, a. 5, ad. 1; cf. III, q. xlviii, a. 6, q. xlix, a. 1, q. xxvii, *de Veritate*, 1, 4.

when, for love of His Father and for love of us, Christ delivers Himself up that He may give Divine life to all mankind, He asks His Father: "Father, glorify Thy Son . . . as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh", and He adds: "that He may *give eternal life* to all whom Thou hast given Him."[18] Jesus asks His Father to fulfil even now in principle His divine plan. The Father has established Christ as the head of humanity; He wills that in Christ alone all humanity should find salvation, and Our Lord asks that it may be thus, since by His passion and death He is about, in substituting Himself for us, to expiate the crimes of all humanity and merit for this humanity every grace of salvation and life.

Our Lord's prayer has been heard. Because, by His sufferings and merits, He wrought the salvation of the human race, Christ is established the universal dispenser of all grace. He humbled Himself, and *therefore* on the day of His ascension, His Father exalted Him "and hath given Him a name which is above all names": *Exinanivit semetipsum: propter quod et Deus exaltivit illum et donavit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen.*[19] He has established Him "heir of all things": *Quem constituit haeredem universorum;*[20] and because Christ has won them by His Blood; His Father has given Him the nations as an inheritance: *Postula a me et dabo tibi gentes haereditatem tuam.*[21] For them, all power of grace and life has been given to Christ, in heaven and upon earth: *Data est mihi omnis potestas in cœlo et in terra;*[22] because "the Father loveth the Son . . . He hath given all things into His hand". *Pater diligit Filium et* OMNIA *dedit in manu ejus.*[23]

Thus as the one Model and supreme High Priest, the Redeemer of the world and universal Mediator, Christ is, moreover, established the dispenser of all grace. "The effusion of grace in us", says St. Thomas, "belongs only to Christ, and this sanctifying causality results from the intimate union existing in Christ between the Divinity and Humanity".[24] "The soul of Christ", he says again, "has received grace in supreme plenitude; in consequence of this plenitude that He has received, it is befitting that Christ should make souls partakers of it; and thus He fulfils His office of head and chief of the Church. Therefore the grace that adorns the soul of Christ is, in its essence, the same as that which purifies us."[25]

[18] Joan. xvii, 1-2. [19] Philip. ii, 7, 9. [20] Hebr. i, 2.
[21] Ps. ii, 8. [22] Matth. xxviii, 18. [23] Joan. iii, 35.
[24] *Interior autem influxus gratiae non est ab aliquo nisi a solo Christo, cujus humanitas ex hoc quod est divinitati conjuncta habet virtutem justificandi.* St. Thom. III, q. viii, a. 6.
[25] III, q. viii, a. 5.

II

But you may ask, now that Christ has ascended into Heaven, and men no longer see, nor hear, nor touch Him, how is this power of grace and life produced in us? How is the action of Our Lord exercised over us and in us? How is He now the efficient cause of our holiness, and how does He produce in us that grace which is the source of life?

Christ, being God, is absolute master of His gifts and of the manner in which He distributes them; we are no more able to limit His power than we are to determine all His modes of action. Christ Jesus can, when it seems good to Him, cause grace to flow directly into the soul without intermediary. The lives of the saints are full of these examples of divine liberty and liberality.

However in the present economy, the normal and official manner in which Christ's grace comes to us is through the sacraments He has instituted. He could sanctify us otherwise than He does; but from the moment that, being God, He Himself established these means of salvation—which He alone had the right to determine, since He is the Author of the supernatural order—it is to these authentic means that recourse must first be had. All the practices of asceticism we can invent to maintain and increase the divine life within us are only of value in so far as they help us to profit more abundantly by these sources of life. They are, indeed, true and pure sources as well as inexhaustible ones where we shall infallibly find the Divine life with which Christ Jesus is filled and of which He wills to make us partakers. *Veni ut vitam habeant.*

Let us then see what these means are.

I will not give you here all the theology of the sacraments, but I hope to say enough to show you how the goodness and wisdom of our Divine Saviour shines forth in these inventions.

What then is a sacrament? The Holy Council of Trent (to which we must always have recourse in this matter, because it has fixed the doctrine with wonderful precision) tells us that a sacrament is an outward sign which signifies and produces invisible grace; it is a symbol which contains and confers Divine grace. It is a sensible, outward, tangible sign, we are at once matter and spirit, and Christ has willed to use matter—water, oil, wheat, wine, word, imposition of hands—to denote the grace He wills to produce in our souls. Being Eternal Wisdom, Christ has adapted to our nature, both

material and spiritual, the sensible means of communicating His grace.[26]

I say "communicate", for these signs do not only signify and symbolize grace. They contain and confer it: by the will and institution of Christ Jesus, to Whom the Father has given all power, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost is God, these signs and rites are efficacious, and really produce grace in our inmost soul.

Let us listen to our Divine Saviour. He teaches us that the water of baptism cleanses us from our sins, that by it we are born to the life of grace, made children of God and heirs of His kingdom: *Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto, non potest introire in regnum Dei;*[27] He teaches us again that the word of His minister who absolves us, takes away our sins: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them"; He teaches us that under the appearances of bread and wine are really contained His Body and Blood which we must eat and drink in order to have life; He declares concerning marriage that man cannot put asunder those whom God has joined together; tradition, the echo of the teaching of Jesus, repeats that the imposition of hands confers on those who receive it the Holy Spirit and His gifts.[28]

One of the characters which shows the condescension of our Divine Saviour in the institution of the Sacraments is that these signs produce of themselves the grace they contain: *Ex opere operato.* This grace is given by the sacramental act itself, the proper application alone of the symbols and rites to the soul, and that independently, not of the intention, but of the personal worth of the one who administers it. The unworthiness of a heretical or sacrilegious minister cannot prevent the effect of the sacrament, so long as this minister conforms to the intention of the Church and intends to do what the Church does in a like case; baptism given by an heretical minister is valid. Why is this? Because Christ, the Man-God, has willed to place the communication of His graces above all consideration of the merit or virtue of those who serve Him as instruments. The value of the sacrament does not depend on human dignity nor holiness, it proceeds from the fact of having been

[26] *Si incorporeus esses, nuda et incorporea tibi dedisset ipse dona, sed quia anima corpori conjuncta est, sensibilibus intelligiblia tibi praestat.* St. Joan. Chrysost. *Hom.* 82 *in Matth., et Hom.* 60 *ad. popul. Antioch.*

[27] Joan. iii, 5.

[28] As to the question of knowing whether all the sacraments were instituted *directly, in all their details,* by Christ Himself, it matters little; several of the sacraments offer this character; we do not read in the Gospel that it was so for all. But if Christ left His apostles to determine certain details, even important ones, it is not less true that it is He Who has attached to all these symbols the grace of which He alone is the author and unique source.

instituted by Christ, and that gives the faithful soul infinite assurance in this divine help.[29]

Is that to say there is no necessity for preparation? Quite the contrary. What then is required?

First, that general disposition concerning the production of grace itself; namely that the one who receives the sacraments does not place any obstacle to their action, to their operation, to their energy: *non ponentibus obicem*. Dam up a river, the water cannot pass; raise the floodgate, the water will rush forth. So it is with the grace of the sacraments; there is in them all that is necessary for their action; yet it is also necessary that grace should not meet with any obstacle in us. What kind of obstacle? That varies in its nature according to the character of the signs and the grace the sacraments confer. Thus we can only receive the grace of a sacrament if we consent to it; the adult on whom Baptism is conferred cannot receive the grace if his will is opposed to the reception of the sacrament; in the same way, lack of contrition is an obstacle to the reception of the grace of the Sacrament of Penance; again, mortal sin forms an obstacle which prevents us from receiving the grace of the Eucharist. Remove the obstacle, and grace descends on the soul, as soon as the sacrament is conferred.

But, I will add, enlarge, by faith, confidence and love, the capacity of your souls and grace will abound in you. For if the grace of the sacraments is substantially the same for all, it varies in degree, in intensity, according to the dispositions of those who receive it after having removed the obstacles; it is measured, certainly not in its entity but in its fruitfulness and extent of action, according to the dispositions of the soul. Let us then open wide the avenues of our souls to Divine grace; let us bring for our part all possible charity and purity so that Christ may make His Divine life superabound in us.

For it is He, Christ, the Incarnate Word, Who inasmuch as He is God, is the efficient, primary and principal cause of the grace produced by the sacraments. Why is this? Because He alone can produce grace Who is the source and author of it. The sacraments, signs charged to transmit this grace to the soul, only act in the capacity of instruments; they are a cause of grace, a real and efficient cause, but only instrumental.

Look at an artist in his studio: with his chisel he hews and sculptures the marble in order to realize the ideal that haunts his genius. When the master-piece is finished, it is exact to say that the artist created it

[29] *Secura Ecclesia spem non posuit in homine . . . sed spem suam posuit in Christo, qui sic accepit formam servi ut non amitteret formam Dei.* St. Augustin. *Epistola,* lxxxix, 5.

but the chisel was the instrument that transmitted that artist's idea. The work is due to the chisel, but it was guided by the master's hand, itself directed by the genius which conceived the work.

So it is with the sacraments: they are the signs that produce grace, not as the principal cause—it is from Christ alone that sanctifying grace flows as from its one source—but as instruments, in virtue of the power they receive from the humanity of Christ united to the Word and filled with Divine life.[30] In the person of the priest, it is Christ Himself who baptizes, Who absolves. "Peter baptizes, says St. Augustin, "it is Christ Who baptizes; Judas baptizes, it is Christ Who does so." *Petrus baptizet, Christus baptizat; Judas baptizet, Christus baptizat.*[31] Whoever is the minister, he here acts only in virtue of Christ;[32] they are Christ's merits which are applied; they are His satisfactions of which we are made partakers; it is the life of Christ which, by these channels, flows into our souls.

All the efficacy which the sacraments have to communicate to us the Divine life, comes therefore from Christ, Who, by His life and sacrifice on the Cross, has merited every grace for us, and has ordained these signs whereby this grace may reach us. If we had faith, if we understood that these are Divine means, Divine both in their primary and primordial source and in the ultimate end to which they tend, with what fervour and frequency we should use these means multiplied along our life's path by our Saviour's goodness!

III

That which causes the admirable wisdom of the Incarnate Word to shine forth in this domain is that the sacraments envelop our whole life with sanctifying influences.

There is, says St. Thomas, an analogy between the natural and the supernatural life.[33] We are born to the supernatural life by Baptism; this life has to be strengthened: that is the work of Confirmation;

[30] *Sacramenta corporalia per propriam operationem quam exercent circa corpus quod tangunt, efficiunt operationem instrumentalem ex virtute divina circa animam; sicut aqua baptismi abluendo corpus secundum propriam virtutem, abluit animam in quantum est instrumentum virtutis divinae: nam ex anima et corpore unum fit. Et hoc est quod Augustinus dicit quod corpus tangit et cor abluit.* St. Thom. III, q. lxii, a. i, ad. 2. *Vis spiritualis est in sacramentis in quantum ordinantur a Deo ad effectum spiritualem.* III, q. lxvii, a. 4, ad. 1; cf. q. lxiv, a. 4.

[31] *Tract. in Joan.* vi.

[32] Commenting on these words: *Dominus baptizabat plures quam Joannes, quamvis ipse non baptizaret sed discipuli ejus.* St. Augustine writes: *Ipse et non ipse; ipse potestate, illi ministerio; servitutem ad baptizandum illi admovebant, potestas baptizandi in Christo permanebat.—Tract in Joan,* v, 1.

[33] St. Thom. III, q. lxv, a. 1.

one is born and comes to maturity only once: that is why these two sacraments are not to be repeated. Like the body, the soul has to be nourished: the food of the soul is the Eucharist, which may be our daily food; when we fall into sin, the Sacrament of Penance restores grace to us, as many times as is necessary, by purifying us from our faults. If mortal sickness overtakes us, Extreme Unction prepares us for the passage into eternity, and sometimes even gives back health to the body, if such be the design of God. All these various sacraments create, nourish, strengthen, assure, repair, and make the Divine life grow and increase in the soul of each one of us.

And as man is not an isolated individual, but also a member of a society, the Sacrament of Matrimony sanctifies the family, and blesses the propagation of the human race, while the Sacrament of Holy Order perpetuates the spiritual paternity by means of the priesthood.

All the Sacraments, without exception, confer grace, that is to say, they increase in the soul the life of Christ. Sanctifying grace, infused virtues, gifts of the Holy Spirit, this wonderful *ensemble* under the name of the state of grace, adorns the substance of our soul and causes its faculties to bear supernatural fruit, so as to make it one with Christ Jesus, and worthy in the sight of the Eternal Father.

In each sacrament, we receive sanctifying grace or an increase of this grace; but this same grace bears, in the different sacraments, a special character, it contains special energies and produces particular and determined effects, conformed to the end for which the sacrament was instituted, and that we have just indicated; and, as you also know, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Order imprint on the soul as with a seal, an ineffaceable character: the character of the Christian, of the soldier of Christ, of the priest of the Most High.

What must chiefly be remembered in this anthology (which we must not push to the extreme limit),[34] is that the life of the Christian is sanctified at its principal stages, and that Christ has provided for all our supernatural needs. Whatever be the circumstance of any importance in our existence, grace is there, under a special, opportune and helpful form; Jesus Christ accompanies us during our whole existence here below; He is with us all the time.

Let us then have faith, a lively, practical faith in these means of sanctification; Christ has willed and merited that their efficacy should be supreme, their excellence transcendent, their fruitfulness inexhaustible: they are signs charged with Divine life. Christ has willed to lay up in them all His merits and satisfactions in order to communicate

[34] Notably for the Sacrament of Penance when it restores the soul to Divine life: in the natural life one only dies once.

them to us: nothing can or ought to take their place. They are, in the present economy of the Redemption, necessary for salvation.[35]

It must be repeated, because experience shows how in the long run, even with souls who seek God, the practical estimation of these means of salvation sometimes leaves much to be desired. The sacraments are, with the doctrine given by the Church, the official channels authentically created by Christ to make us attain to His Father. It is to wrong Him not to appreciate their value, their riches, their fruitfulness, while He is glorified when we draw from these treasures acquired by His merits: we thus acknowledge that we hold all from Him, and that renders Him very pleasing homage.

There are souls who have but a mediocre faith in these sacred signs and who, practically, use them very parsimoniously; as they attach only little attention to the grace produced in them by the sacraments, they prepare themselves half-heartedly or give their preferences to extraordinary means. Certainly, as I have said, Jesus Christ always remains absolute Master of His gifts, He distributes them when it seems good to Him and to whom He pleases. We see in the Saints marvels of Divine generosity, from the *charisma* which illustrate the times of the early Christians to the wonderful favours which, even in our days, abound in so many souls: *Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis*. But in this matter, Christ has made no promise to anyone; He has not indicated these means as the regular way, either of salvation, or even of holiness, whilst He has instituted the sacraments, with their particular energies and efficacious virtues; hence they constitute, in their harmonious variety, the whole means of sure salvation. Here there is no illusion possible, and we know how dangerous are illusions created by the devil in matters of piety and sanctity!

God *wills* our sanctification: *Haec est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra*.[36] Christ repeats: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect";[37] in these words then it is not simply a question of salvation, but of perfection, of holiness. Now it is not in extraordinary means, in raptures, and ecstasies, that Our Lord has normally placed the life He wills to communicate to us in order to render us perfect, to make us saints, pleasing to His Father: it is first of all in the sacraments. That He should have willed this is sufficient to make our souls, eager for holiness, abandon themselves to this will in all faith, in all confidence. These are the true sources of life and sanctification, all sufficing and abundant sources; in vain shall we go to draw

[35] Although it must be added that this necessity is not the same for all the sacraments; for example, Baptism is absolutely necessary for all; it is not the same, in what concerns men taken individually, for Holy Orders and Matrimony.

[36] I Thess. iv, 3. [37] Matth. v, 48.

elsewhere; we should forsake, according to the energetic words of Scripture, "the fountain of living water", to dig to ourselves "broken cisterns that can hold no water".[38] All our spiritual activity ought to have no other reason, no other aim, than to enable us to draw always more abundantly, more largely, with more faith and purity, from these Divine fountains and to make the grace proper to each sacrament grow in us with more ease and liberty, more vigour and power.

Oh! let us come with joy to draw at these fountains of salvation: *Haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus Salvatoris.*[39] Draw from these salutary waters; enlarge the capacity of your souls by repentance, humility, confidence, and above all, by love, so that the action of the sacrament may become deeper, vaster, and more lasting. Each time we approach the Sacraments, let us renew our faith in the riches of Christ; this faith prevents routine from finding its way into the soul that frequents these sources; let us draw from them frequently, above all from the Eucharist, pre-eminently the sacrament of life; these are the fountains which our Saviour, by His infinite merits, caused to spring up at the foot of His Cross, or rather, from the depths of His Sacred Heart.

St. Augustine, commenting on the text of the Gospel on the death of Christ: *Unus militum lancea latus ejus aperuit,* "one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side", writes these remarkable words:[40] "The Evangelist makes use of an expression chosen purposely; he does not say: (in speaking of the thrust of the lance given by the soldier to Jesus on the Cross) *he struck* or *he wounded* His side, or any similar word, but *he opened* His side, to teach us that he thus opened for us the gate of life from whence issue forth the sacraments, without which access cannot be had to the true life." All these sources spring from the Cross, from the love of Christ; all apply to us the fruits of the death of the Saviour, by the virtue of His Blood.

If then we wish to live as Christians, if we seek perfection, if we tend towards holiness, let us draw from these waters with joy: *In gaudio;* for these are the sources of life here below, and of glory above. "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink . . ."[41] For he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever,

[38] *Me dereliquerunt fontem aquae vivae, et foderunt sibi cisternas, cisternas dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquas.* Jerem. ii, 13.

[39] Isa. xii, 3.

[40] *Vigilanti verbo Evangelista usus est ut non diceret: latus ejus percussit aut vulneravit, aut quid aliud, sed aperuit, ut illic quodammodo vitae ostium panderetur, unde sacramenta manaverunt sine quibus, ad vitam quae vita vera est, non intratur.—Tract. in Joan.* cxx.

[41] Joan. vii, 37.

but the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting."[42]

"Come, my dearly beloved," our Saviour seems to say to us, "come and drink and be inebriated." *Inebriamini carissimi;*[43] come and drink from these fountains, by which, under the veil of faith, I communicate My own life to you here below, until the day on which, all symbols having disappeared, I will Myself make thee drink of the torrent of My beatitude in the eternal brightness of My light: *Et torrente voluptatis tuae potabis eos.*[44]

IV

The riches of the grace Christ communicates to us are so great—St. Paul declares them unfathomable, *Investigabiles divitiae Christi*—that the sacraments are never exhausted. Outside the sacraments Christ still acts and operates in us. How is this? By the contact we have with Him in faith.

In order to understand this, let us read again an episode related by St. Luke. In one of His apostolic journeys, our Divine Saviour is surrounded and pressed by the multitude. A sick woman, desiring to be healed, approaches Him, and, full of confidence, touches the hem of His garment. Immediately, Our Lord asks those who surround Him: "Who is it that touched Me?" And Peter answers: "Master, the multitude throng and press Thee, and dost Thou say, Who touched Me?" But Jesus insists: "Somebody hath touched Me; for I know that virtue is gone out from Me". And at that very instant the woman was healed: and this, on account of her faith: *Fides tua te salvam fecit.*[45]

Something analogous takes place for us also. Each time that, even outside the sacraments, we approach Christ, a strength, a Divine virtue goes out from Him and penetrates our souls to enlighten and help them.

You know the means of approaching Him is faith. By faith, we touch Christ, and at this Divine contact, little by little, our soul is transformed.

As I have said, Christ has come amongst us to give us a share in all His riches, in all the perfection of His virtues, for all He has belongs to us; all is for us. Each of Our Lord's actions is not only a model for us, but a source of grace. In practising all the virtues, He has merited for us the grace to be able to practise these same virtues which

[42] Ibid. iv, 13. [43] Cant. v, 1. [44] Ps. xxxv, 9. [45] Luc. viii, 43-48.

we contemplate in Him, and each of His mysteries contains a special grace in which He wills to give us a real participation.

It is certain that those who lived in Judea with Christ and had faith in Him, received an abundant share in those graces which He merited for all men; the Gospel assures us of this. Christ had not only, as I have shown you, power to cure corporal infirmities, but also the power to sanctify souls. See for example how He sanctified the woman of Samaria who, after having spoken with Him, believed Him to be the Messias; how He purified Magdalen who, considering Him to be a prophet, One sent by God, came to pour her perfumes over His sacred feet. The contact of the Son of God becomes, for the souls who have faith in Him, the source of life: *Fides tua te salvam fecit.* See how, during His Passion, by one look of His, He gives to Peter, who has thrice denied Him, the grace of repentance; see how at the death of Jesus the good thief confesses Him to be the Son of God, since he asks for a place in His kingdom; and immediately the Saviour, on the point of expiring, grants him the remission of his crimes: "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

We know this, we are so convinced of it that sometimes we say: Oh, if it had been given to me to live with Our Lord in Judea, to have followed Him like the Apostles, to have approached Him during His life, and to have been present at His death, I should have been so surely sanctified! And yet, however, hear what Jesus says: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." BEATI *qui non viderunt et crediderunt.*[46]

Does not this make us understand that contact with Him by faith alone is still more efficacious, and more advantageous to us? Let us then believe in these words of Our Divine Master: His words are "spirit and life":[47] let us be persuaded that the power and virtue of His holy humanity are the same for us as for His contemporaries; for Christ lives always: *Christus heri, et* HODIE, *ipse et in saecula.*[48]

I can never repeat often enough how eminently useful it is for our souls to remain united to Our Lord by the contact of faith. You know that from the beginning of their journeying in the desert, the Israelites murmured against Moses. To punish them, God sent serpents whose bite caused them great suffering. Then, touched by their repentance, God commanded Moses to lift up a brazen serpent of which the sight alone sufficed to heal the wounds of the children of Israel.[49] Now, according to Our Lord's own words,[50] this brazen serpent was the

[46] Joan. xx, 29. [47] Ibid. vi, 64. [48] Hebr. xiii, 8. [49] Num. xxi, 9.
[50] Joan. iii, 14.

figure of Christ lifted up on the Cross. And Our Lord said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.[51] Because He has merited all grace for us by the sacrifice of the Cross, Jesus Christ has become for us the source of all light and strength. And that is why the humble and loving glance of the soul upon the Sacred Humanity of Jesus is so fruitful and so efficacious.

We do not think enough of the power of sanctification that Christ's Humanity possesses, even outside the sacraments.[52]

The means of placing ourselves in contact with Christ is faith in His Divinity, in His Almighty power, in the infinite value of His satisfactions, in the inexhaustible efficacy of His merits. In one of His sermons to the people of Hippo, St. Augustine asks how we can "touch Christ", now that He has ascended into Heaven? *In caelo sedentem quis mortalium potest tangere?* He answers that it is by faith; "he touches Christ who believes in Christ". *Sed ille tactus fidem significat; tangit Christum qui credit in Christum.* And the holy Doctor recalls the faith of that woman who touched Jesus to obtain her cure: *Fide tetigit et sanitas subsecuta est.* There are, he says, many carnal men who have only seen Jesus Christ as man, and have not understood the Divinity which was veiled by His humanity. They did not know how to touch Him because their faith was not what it ought to have been. Would you touch Jesus Christ with profit? Believe in the Divinity which, as the Word, He shares from all eternity with the Father. *Vis bene tangere? Intellige Christum ubi est Patri coaeternus—et tetigisti.*[53]

To believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ is, then, the means which places us in contact with Christ, the source of all grace and all life. When, then, in reading the Gospel, we ponder in our minds the words and actions of Our Lord; when, in prayer, or in meditation, we contemplate his virtues; above all, when we associate with the Church in the celebration of His mysteries (as I shall show later); when we unite ourselves to Him in each of our actions, whether we eat or work, or do any action indifferent in itself in union with the like actions that He Himself accomplished when He lived here below, when we do this with faith and love, with humility and confidence, there is then a strength, a power, a Divine virtue, which goes out from Christ to enlighten us, to help us to remove obstacles

[51] Ibid. xii, 32.

[52] Read on this subject the *Retreat* by the late Mgr Hedley, Bishop of Newport. In Chap. xii, *Looking upon Jesus,* we see exposed by one of the best English ascetical authors this "most powerful. and almost miraculous, efficacy of transformation" that the Sacred Humanity has upon souls that contemplate it in faith.

[53] *Sermo.* ccxliii, c. 2; cf. *Sermones.* lxii, 3; ccxliv, 3 and ccxlv, 3; *In Ioan.* xxvi, 3.

to His Divine operations in us, so as to produce grace in our souls.

You will perhaps say: But I do not feel this. It is not necessary to feel it. Our Lord said Himself that His kingdom "cometh not with observation",[54] that it is beyond the experience of the senses: the supernatural life is not based on sentimentality. If God makes us feel the sweetness of His service, even in the sensible faculties, we ought to thank Him for it, and use this inferior gift as a ladder by which to rise higher, as a means to increase our fidelity, but not to be attached to it, and above all, not to found our interior life upon this sensible devotion; it is much too unstable a basis. We might be as much in error in believing we are advanced in the way of perfection because our sensible devotion is very intense, as in imagining we are making no progress because our soul is in spiritual dryness. What, then, is the true basis of our supernatural life? It is faith, and faith is a virtue exercised by our superior faculties: intelligence and will. Now what does faith tell us? That Jesus is God as well as man, that His humanity is the humanity of a God, the humanity of the Being Who is Infinite Wisdom, Love itself, and Omnipotence. How, then, can we doubt that when we approach Him, even outside the sacraments, with humility and confidence, Divine power comes forth from Him to enlighten, strengthen and help us? No one has ever approached Jesus Christ with faith without being touched by the beneficent rays that ever escape from this furnace of light and heat: *Virtus de illo exibat.*

Jesus Christ, Who is always living, *semper vivens,* and Whose Humanity remains indissolubly united to the Divine Word, thus becomes for us—and that in the measure of our faith, and the ardour of our desire to imitate Him—a light and a source of life; and little by little, if we are faithful in contemplating Him in this manner, He will imprint His likeness in us, by revealing Himself more intimately to us, by making us share the sentiments[55] of His Divine Heart and by giving us the strength to live according to these sentiments. "It is evident to me," said St. Teresa, "that in order to please God, to receive great graces from Him, it is necessary and such is His Will, that they should pass through the hands of this Sacred Humanity (of Christ) with which He has Himself declared He is well pleased. I have made the experience of this a great number of times, and Our Lord Himself has told me so. I have recognized manifestly that this is the door by which we must enter if we wish the Supreme Majesty to

[54] Luc. xvii, 20 sq.

[55] The word *sentiment* is here taken in the spiritual acceptation of the word, as the affection of the *will.*

discover His high secrets to us . . . One travels in assurance along this way."[56] We understand then the truth of this word of Jesus: *Ego sum vitis, vos palmites; qui manet in me et ego in eo, hic fert fructum multum.*[57] "My Father is the husbandman; I am the Vine: you are the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." According to the beautiful remark of St. Augustine, it is as man that Christ is the Vine; as God, one with His Father, He is the Vine-dresser Who works, not exteriorly like the vine-dressers of this world, but interiorly, thereby to give increase of grace and life; for, adds the great Doctor, quoting St. Paul, he who plants is nothing, neither is he who waters, but God Who gives the increase: *Nec talis quales sunt qui extrinsecus operando exhibent ministerium, sed talis ut det etiam intrinsecus incrementum.*[58]

From the Vine, which is Jesus, the sap of grace rises into the branches which are our souls, if, however, we *remain* united to the Vine. How is this to be done?

By the Sacraments, above all by that of the Eucharist, the very Sacrament of union: *Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me* MANET *et ego in illo.*[59] "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him." Next by faith; St. Paul tells us: *Christus* HABITARE PER FIDEM *in cordibus vestris;*[60] by faith vivified by love, that is to say, the perfect faith that accompanies the state of grace, Christ dwells in us; and each time that we place ourselves in contact with Jesus by this faith, Christ exercises His sanctifying power over us.[61]

But for this, it is needful that we should put away all obstacles to this action—sin, deliberate imperfections, attachment to creatures, and to ourselves: it is necessary, too, that we should have an ardent desire to resemble Him; that our faith should be living and practical: a living faith, that is to say, an unshaken faith in the infinite treasures of holiness contained in Christ Who is *All* for us; a practical, watchful faith which throws us at the feet of Jesus in order to do all that He asks of us for the glory of His Father.

It is then, as the Council of Trent says, that Christ "unceasingly pours His sanctifying virtue into us, as the head does to the members, as the vine does into the branches; for this salutary virtue does not cease to precede, to accompany and follow our good actions": *Ille ipse Christus tamquam caput in membra, et tamquam vitis in palmites, in*

[56] *Life by Herself.* [57] Joan. xv, 5. [58] *Tract in Joan.* lxxx.
[59] Joan. vi, 57. [60] Ephes. iii, 17.
[61] *Christus per fidem habitat in nobis, ut dicitur* Ephes. iii, *et ideo virtus Christi copulatur nobis per fidem.* St. Thom. III, q. lxii, a. 5, ad. 2.

ipsos justificatos JUGITER *virtutem* INFLUIT: *quae virtus bona eorum opera semper antecedit et comitatur et subsequitur.*[62]

It is by the grace of Christ that we become holy, pleasing to God, His Father, so that through Him also, all glory is referred to the Father; because He loves His Son, the Father has constituted Him head of the kingdom of the elect, and has given all into His hands: *Pater amat Filium et* OMNIA *dedit in manu ejus.*[63]

[62] *Concil. Trid. sess.* vi, c. 16. [63] Joan. iii, 35.

NOTE

There is a page of St. Thomas (Q. *De Veritate,* a. 4.) which resumes very well the doctrine exposed in this conference. The human nature of Our Lord, writes St. Thomas, is the organ of the Divinity, and that is why it communicated to the operations of the Divine virtue: thus, when Christ healed the leper by touching him, this contact instrumentally caused health. Now this instrumental efficacy which it had for corporal effects, the holy Humanity exercises also in the spiritual order; His Blood shed for us has a sanctifying virtue to wash away our sins. The Humanity of Jesus is then the instrumental cause of justification, and this is applied to us *spiritually by faith, corporally by the Sacraments,* because Christ's Humanity is spirit and body. It is in this way we must receive within us the effect of the sanctification which is in Christ. Also, the most perfect of the Sacraments is that which really contains the Body of Our Lord, that is to say, the Eucharist, the end and consummation of all the others. As to the other Sacraments, they receive something of that virtue by which the Humanity of Christ is the instrument of justification; so that, according to the language of the Apostle (Hebr. x), the Christian sanctified by Baptism is also sanctified by the Blood of Jesus Christ. The Passion of the Saviour operates therefore in the Sacraments of the New Law; and these concur as instruments for the producing of grace.

V. THE CHURCH, THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

SUMMARY. The mystery of the *Church inseparable* from the Mystery *of Christ:* they form only one mystery. I. The Church, *the society* founded on the Apostles: *the doctrine and authority of Jesus* are deposited with the Church; she dispenses *His Sacraments* and continues *His work of religion.* We only come *to Christ through the Church.* II. The truth which places the special character of the *Church's visibility* in relief: *God* wills to guide us through the ministry *of men:* importance of this supernatural *economy resulting from the Incarnation;* it glorifies Jesus and exercises our faith. *Our duties* towards the Church. III. The Church, *Christ's mystical body,* of which He is *the Head* because He has *all primacy.* Far-reaching consequences of this union: "We are Christ", all are "one in Christ". To remain *united to one another* and *to Jesus* by charity.

IN the preceding conferences I have tried to show how Our Lord is our All. He has been chosen by His Father to be the one Model of all holiness, in His state of Son of God, and in His virtues. He has merited, by His Life, Passion, and Death, to be for ever the universal dispenser of all grace. It is from Him that all grace proceeds, and all Divine life flows into our souls. St. Paul tells us that God "hath subjected all things under His feet, and hath made Him head over all the Church, which is His body and the fulness of Him Who is filled all in all": *Omnia subjecit sub pedibus ejus (Christi), et ipsum dedit caput supra omnem Ecclesiam, quae est corpus ipsius et plenitudo ejus.*[1]

By these words, in which he speaks of the Church, the Apostle completes the description of the economy of the mystery of Christ; we shall only understand this mystery well if we follow St. Paul in his exposition.

According to the beautiful words of St. Augustine, we cannot have a full conception of Christ considered apart from the Church: *Totus Christus caput et corpus est: caput Unigenitus Dei Filius, et corpus ejus Ecclesia.*[2] Jesus has the glory of His Father in view, as the foundation of all His life, of all His acts, but the masterpiece by which He is

[1] Ephes. i, 22-23.

[2] *De Unitate Eccles.* 4. No one has exposed this doctrine better than St. Augustine; the holy Doctor has developed it especially in the *Enar. in Psalm.*

to procure this glory is the Church. Christ comes on earth to create and constitute the Church; it is the work to which all His existence converges, and He confirms it by His Passion and Death. His love for His Father led Jesus Christ to the mountain of Calvary, but it was there to form the Church, and make of her, by purifying her in His Divine Blood, a spotless and immaculate Bride: *Dilexit Ecclesiam et seipsum tradidit pro ea ut illam sanctificaret.*[3]

This is what St. Paul tells us. Let us then see what this Church is, of which the name occurs so often under the great Apostle's pen as to be inseparable from that of Christ.

We may consider the Church in *two ways*: first as a visible, hierarchical society, founded by Christ to continue His sanctifying mission here below; she appears thus, as a living organism. But this point of view is not the only one; to have a complete idea of the Church, we must regard her as the holy and invisible society of the souls that share by grace in Christ's Divine Sonship, and form the Kingdom He won by His Blood. That is what St. Paul calls the body of Christ, not of course, His physical body, but His mystical body. It is on this second point of view we shall principally dwell: we must not, however, pass over the first in silence.

It is true that the invisible Church, or the soul of the Church, is more important than the visible Church, but, in the normal econmy of Christianity, it is only by union with the visible society that souls have participation in the possessions and privileges of the invisible kingdom of Christ.

I

I have referred above to the testimony Peter gave, in the name of the other disciples, to the Divinity of Jesus: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art thou," says Jesus to him, "because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."[4]

You will notice that it is as yet only a promise which rewards the apostle for the homage rendered to the Divinity of his Master. After the Resurrection,[5] Jesus, being again in the midst of His disciples, says to Peter: "Lovest thou Me?" "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And Our Lord says to him: "Feed My lambs." Then He

[3] Ephes. v, 25-26. [4] Matth. xvi, 16-19. [5] Joan. xxi, 15-17.

repeats the question three times, and at each of Peter's protestations, Our Lord invests him as the visible Head of all His flock, both sheep and lambs. This investiture only took place after Peter had effaced his triple denial by a triple act of love. Thus Christ claimed a testimony of His Divinity from His Apostle before fulfilling the promise He had made of founding His Church upon him.

It is not necessary for me to explain how this society, established by Christ on Peter and the Apostles, so as to maintain the supernatural life in souls, has been organized and developed and spread throughout the world.

What we have to remember is that, here on earth, she continues the mission of Jesus by her doctrine and jurisdiction, by her Sacraments and worship.

By her doctrine, which she guards intact and integral in a living and uninterrupted tradition; by her jurisdiction, in virtue of which she has authority to direct us in the name of Christ; by the Sacraments whereby she enables us to draw from the sources of grace which her Divine Founder has created; by the worship which she herself organizes so as to render all glory and honour to Jesus Christ, and to His Father.

How does the Church continue Christ by *her doctrine* and *jurisdiction*?

When Christ came into this world, the only means of going to the Father was to submit oneself entirely to His Son Jesus: *Hic est Filius meus dilectus, ipsum audite.* In the beginning of the public life of the Saviour, the Eternal Father showed His Son to the Jews, and said to them: Hear Him because He is My Only Son; I send Him to reveal to you the secrets of My Divine life and My will: *Ipse enarravit . . . ipsum audite.*

But since His Ascension, Christ has left His Church on earth, and this Church is like the extension of the Incarnation amongst us. The Church—that is to say, the Sovereign Pontiff, and the Bishops, with the pastors who are subject to them—speaks to us with all the infallible authority of Jesus Christ Himself.

While He was upon earth, Christ contained infallibility in Himself: *Ego sum veritas.* "I am the Truth; I am the Life; he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[6] Before leaving us, He confided these powers to His Church: *Sicut misit Me Pater, et ego mitto vos.* "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you;[7] he that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Him that sent Me." *Qui vos audit, Me audit: et qui vos spernit, Me*

[6] Joan. xiv, 6; viii, 12. [7] Ibid. xx, 21.

spernit. Qui autem Me spernit, spernit eum qui misit Me.[8] "In the same way that I hold My doctrine from My Father, so the doctrine that you teach, you hold from Me; whosoever receives this doctrine, receives My doctrine, which is that of My Father; whosoever despises it, in whatever degree or measure it may be, despises My doctrine, despises Me, and despises My Father."

Consider then this Church, possessing all the power, all the infallible authority of Christ, and understand that the absolute submission to the Church of all your being, intellect, will, and energies is the only means of going to the Father. Christianity in its true expression, only exists by means of this absolute submission to the doctrine and laws of the Church.

Properly speaking, this submission to the Church distinguishes the Catholic from the Protestant. For example, the latter may believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, but if he believes in it, it is because he has found this doctrine in the Scriptures and Tradition, by his own efforts and personal lights; the Catholic believes it because the Church, which holds the place of Christ, teaches him this doctrine. Both hold the same truth, but the manner of holding it is different. The Protestant does not submit to any authority; he depends only on himself; the Catholic receives Christ with all that He has taught and founded. Christianity is, in practice, submission to Christ in the person of the Sovereign Pontiff and the pastors united to him: submission of the intellect to their teaching, submission of the will to their commandments. This way is safe, for Our Lord is with His Apostles until the consummation of the world, and He has prayed for Peter and his successors that their faith shall not fail.[9]

The Church is also the living continuation of *Christ's mediation*. It is true, as I have said, that Christ, after His death, can no longer merit.[10] But He is always living to make intercession for us with His Father. I have said, too, that it was above all in instituting the Sacraments that Christ willed to establish the means by which, after His Ascension, His merits would be applied to us, and His grace given to us. But where are these Sacraments to be found? In the Church to which Our Lord entrusted them. "Go, He said to His Apostles (and their successors), when He was about to ascend into heaven, "Teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost."[11] He communicated to them the power of forgiving or retaining sins. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."[12]

[8] Luc. x, 16. [9] Ibid. xxii, 32. [10] P. 59, sq. [11] Matth. xxviii, 19
[12] Joan. xx, 23; Luc. xii, 19.

He gave them the mission of renewing in His Name and in commemoration of Him, the Sacrifice of His Body and Blood.

Do you wish to enter into the family of God, to be admitted among His children, to be incorporated with Christ? Go to the Church; her Baptism is the door through which you must pass. In the same way, to obtain the pardon of our sins, it is the Church to whom we must have recourse.[13] If we wish to receive the food of our souls, we must look for it from the priests, who, by the Sacrament of Holy Order, have received the sacred power of dispensing the Bread of Life; and among those who are baptized the union between man and woman is culpable if the Church has not consecrated it by her blessing. So, then, the official means established by Jesus, those fountains of grace which He has caused to spring up for us, are in the keeping of the Church.

Lastly, Our Lord has confided to His Church, the mission of continuing here below *His work of religion.*

Jesus Christ, when upon earth, offered a perfect canticle of praise to His Father; His soul unceasingly contemplated the Divine perfections, and from this contemplation came forth His continual praise and adoration to the glory of His Father. By His Incarnation, Christ associated entire humanity, in principle, with this work of praise. When He left us, He gave to His Church the charge of perpetuating, in His Name, this praise due to His Father. Around the Mass, the centre of all our religion, the Church organizes the worship she alone has the right to offer in the name of Christ her Spouse. She weaves a garland of prayers, formulas, and canticles which surround the Divine Sacrifice. Throughout the year she distributes the celebration of the mysteries of her Spouse, so that each year her children may live these mysteries over again, render thanks for them to Jesus Christ and His Father, and draw from them the Divine life that these mysteries, first lived by Jesus, have merited for us. All her worship relates to Christ. It is in leaning upon the infinite merits of Jesus, upon His quality of universal and ever-living Mediator, that the Church ends all her supplications: *Per Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum qui tecum vivit et regnat;* and in the same way, it is in passing through Christ that all the praise and adoration of the Church ascends to the Eternal Father and is accepted in the sanctuary of the Trinity: *Per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso, est tibi Deo Patri omnipotenti in unitate Spiritus Sancti omnis honor et gloria.*[14]

[13] Saving, of course, the case of material impossibility, when perfect contrition suffices. We are speaking of the rule, and not of exceptions, however numerous they might be. Moreover, perfect contrition includes, at least implicitly, the resolution and desire to have recourse to the Church.

[14] Ordinary of the Mass.

Such then is the manner in which the Church, founded by Jesus, continues His Divine work here below. The Church is the authentic depositary of the doctrine and law of Christ, and the distributor of His graces among men. Lastly, she is the Bride who, in Christ's name, offers perfect praise to God for all her children.

And the Church is thus so much united to Christ, she possesses such an abundance of His riches, that it may be said that she is Christ living throughout the centuries. Christ came upon earth, not only for those who lived at that time in Palestine, but for men of all times. When He deprived men of His sensible presence, He gave them the Church with her doctrine, jurisdiction, Sacraments, and worship, to be as another Christ; it is in the Church that we can find Him. No one goes to the Father—and to go to the Father is all salvation and all sanctity—except through Christ: *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me.*[15] But remember well this no less important truth: no one goes to Christ except through the Church; we only belong to Christ if we belong in fact or in desire to the Church. It is only in the unity of the Church that we can live the life of Christ.

II

As you know, the Church is *visible.*

Her hierarchy is composed of the Sovereign Pontiff the successor of St. Peter, the Bishops, and the pastors, who, united to the Vicar of Christ and the Bishops, exercise their jurisdiction over us in the name of Christ. For it is by the intermediary of man that Christ guides and sanctifies us.

There is a profound truth here, upon which we must dwell.

Since the Incarnation, God, in His relations with us, acts through men; I speak of the normal, regular economy, not of the exceptions by which God safeguards His supreme dominion here, as in all else. For example, God could reveal to us directly what we have to do to come to Him, but that is not His way; He sends us to a man, certainly infallible in the matter of faith, but still a man like ourselves, from whom we must hold all doctrine. In the same way, if someone falls into sin, he may humble himself before God in bitter grief, and perform all sorts of penances. But without confession to a priest appointed by God as His minister, there is no forgiveness. The most ardent and deep contrition, the most terrible penances, do not suffice to blot out a single mortal sin, if one has not the intention of submitting to the

[15] Joan, xiv, 6.

humiliation of making known one's sin to this man, who fills the place of Christ.

You see now in what the supernatural economy consists, namely, that from all eternity God beheld the Incarnation, and, since His Son united Himself to humanity and saved the world by becoming Incarnate, God wills that it should be through the intermediary of men similar to ourselves, weak, as we are, that grace should be poured out upon the world. This is a prolongation, an extension of the Incarnation. God has drawn near to us in the Person of His Son made man, and, since then, it is through the members of His Son that He continues to enter into communication with our souls. God wills by this, as it were, to exalt His Son by referring all to His Incarnation, in thus attaching to it in such a visible manner, and this till the end of time, the whole economy of our salvation and sanctification.

But He has likewise established this economy so as to make us live by faith. For there is a double element in the Church—a human and a Divine element.

The human element is the frailty of the men who hold the power of Christ in order to direct us. Consider how weak St. Peter was! At the words of a servant-maid, he denies his Master, on the very day of his priestly ordination. And yet Christ, well knowing this frailty, founds His Church upon him. Peter's successors are frail; the infallibility which they possess in the matter of faith does not give them the privilege of not sinning. Could not Our Lord have conferred impeccability upon them? Certainly He could: but He has not so willed; He has willed that our faith should be exercised. Why is this?

Through the human element, the faithful soul discerns the Divine element: the indefectibility of doctrine safeguarded during all the centuries and despite all the assaults of heresies and schisms; the unity of this same doctrine preserved by infallible teaching; heroic and uninterrupted holiness manifested in so many ways; the continuous succession by which, link by link, the Church of our days can be traced back to the foundation established by the Apostles; the force of universal development which characterizes her; these are so many certain signs by which we recognize that Our Lord is with His Church "even to the consummation of the word".[16]

Let us then have great confidence in this Church which Jesus has left to us. We have the happiness of belonging to Christ, in belonging to this society which is one, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman. We ought to rejoice greatly, and ever thank God for having "translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love".[17] Is it not an immense assurance

[16] Matth. xxviii, 20. [17] Col. i, 13.

to be able to draw grace and life at their authentic and official sources, through our incorporation with the Church?

Moreover, let us give to those who have jurisdiction over us the obedience which Christ demands of us. This submission of our intellect and will must be given to God in the person of a man, otherwise God does not accept it. Let us give to those who govern us, above all to the Sovereign Pontiff, Vicar of Christ, to the Bishops who are in union with him, and who possess the lights of the Holy Spirit[18] to guide us, that inward submission, that filial reverence, that practical obedience which make of us true children of the Church.

The Church is the Bride of Christ, she is our Mother; we ought to love her because she brings us to Jesus and unites us to Him. We ought to love and revere her doctrine, because it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ; to love her prayer and associate ourselves with it because it is the prayer of the Bride of Christ, and there is none safer for us, none more pleasing to Our Lord. In a word, we ought to attach ourselves to the Church, to all that comes from her, as we should have been attached to the very Person of Jesus and to all that came to us from Him, if it had been given us to follow Him during His earthly life.

Such is the Church as a visible society. St. Paul compares her to an edifice "built upon the foundation of the Apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone". *Ipso summo angulari lapide Christo Jesu.*[19] We live in this house of God, "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints".

III

Another image occurs still more frequently under the pen of St. Paul, a more expressive image, because it is borrowed from life itself, above all because it gives us a more profound conception of the Church in showing the intimate relations existing between her and Christ. These relations are summed up in this phrase of the Apostle: the Church is a body, of which Christ is the Head.[20]

Why is Christ the Head, the Chief of the Church? Because He has the primacy. First of all, a primacy of honour: *Deus exltavit illum et donavit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen,* "God . . . hath

[18] *Spiritus Sanctus posuit episcopos regere Ecclesiam Dei.* Act. xx, 28.

[19] Ephes. ii, 19-22.

[20] Cor. xii, 12 sq. The Apostle also employs other expressions. He says we are joined to Christ as the branches to the trunk (Rom. vi, 5) as the materials that make up an edifice (Ephes. ii, 21-22) but he lays most stress on the idea of a body united to the head.

given Him a Name which is above all names: that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow".[21] A primacy of authority: *Data est mihi omnis potestas.* "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth."[22] But above all, a primacy of life, of interior influence: *Deus omnia subjecit sub pedibus ejus et ipsum dedit caput supra omnem Ecclesiam.* "He hath subjected all things under His feet, and hath made Him head over all the Church."[23]

We are all called to live the life of Christ, but it is from Him that we must all receive it. Christ, as I have said,[24] won this primacy, this supreme power of giving grace to "every man that cometh into this world", by His death. He exercises a primacy of Divine influence by being, for every soul in a different degree, the one source of the grace by which they live.[25] "Christ, says St. Thomas, "has received the fulness of grace, not only for Himself, but in His capacity as Head of the Church."[26]

Doubtless, Christ distributes the treasures of His grace to souls unequally; but, adds St. Thomas, it is in order that from this same gradation, the beauty and perfection of the Church, His mystical body, may result.[27] That is the idea of St. Paul. After having said that grace has been granted to each "according to the measure of the giving of Christ": *Secundum mensuram donationis Christi*,[28] the Apostle enumerates the different graces that adorn souls, and he concludes by saying that they are given "for the edifying of the body of Christ". There is diversity among the members, but this very variety conduces to the harmony of unity.

The union between Christ and His members is such that it goes even as far as *unity*. To touch the Church, to touch those who by Baptism and their life of grace are members of the Church, is to touch Christ Himself.

How well St. Paul understood this doctrine! With what force he has exposed it, and how expressive are his words! "No man," he says, "ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church, because we are members of His body, of His

[21] Phillip. ii, 9. [22] Matth. xxviii, 18. [23] Ephes. i, 22. [24] pp. 51-52.

[25] This divine and interior influence of Christ in the souls that form His mystical body distinguishes this union from the purely moral union existing between the supreme authority of a human society and the members of this society. In the latter case the influence of the authority is exterior, and only goes to co-ordinate and maintain the diverse energies of the members towards a common end; the action of Christ in the Church is more intimate, more penetrating, it touches the very life of souls, and this is one of the reasons why the *mystical body* is not a fiction of our reason, but a most profound reality.

[26] III, q. xlviii, a. 1. [27] I-II, q. cxii, a. 4. [28] Ephes. iv. 7.

flesh and of His bones."[29] And it is because we are united so closely to Christ, forming with Him a single body, that Christ has willed that all His work should be ours.

This is a profound truth that we ought often to have before our eyes. Through Jesus, the Incarnate Word, all humanity regained the friendship of God. St. Thomas writes that in consequence of the identification established by Christ between Him and us from the moment of the Incarnation, the fact that Christ has suffered voluntarily in our place and in our name, constitutes so great a good that, for having found this good in human nature, God, being appeased, forgets all offences in those who unite themselves to Christ.[30] The satisfactions and merits of Christ have become ours.[31]

Since this moment we are indissolubly associated with Jesus Christ. In the thought of the Heavenly Father we are one with Him. "God," says St. Paul, "is rich in mercy, for . . . when we were dead in sins (He) hath quickened us together *in Christ* . . . and hath raised us up *together*, and hath made us sit *together* in the heavenly places . . . that He might show in the ages to come the abundant riches of His grace . . . in Christ Jesus."[32] In a word, He makes us live with Christ, in Christ: CONVIVIFICAVIT *nos in Christo*, in order to make us His joint-heirs. St. Thomas says that "it is by one same eternal act of Divine Wisdom that Christ and ourselves have been predestinated".[33]

Oh, if we had faith in these truths! If we understood what it is for us to have entered, by Baptism, into the Church, to be, by grace, members of Christ's mystical body! "Let us congratulate ourselves, let us break forth into thanksgiving", exclaims St. Augstine,[34] *we are become* not only Christians, but *Christ*. Do we understand, my brethren, the outpouring of God's grace upon us? Let us wonder and thrill with gladness; we are become Christ; He the Head, we the members; the whole Man is He and we. "CHRISTUS *facti* SUMUS; *si enim caput ille, nos membra; totus homo, ille et nos*. . . . Who is the Head, and who are the members? Christ and the Church." The great doctor continues: "This would be a pretention of foolish pride, if Christ Himself had not deigned to promise us this glory when, by the mouth of His Apostle Paul, He said: You are the body of Christ and His members."

[29] Ibid. v, 29-30. [30] III, q. xlix, a. 4.

[31] *Caput et membra sunt quasi una persona mystica et ideo satisfactio Christi ad omnes fideles pertinet sicut ad sua membra.* St. Thom. III, q. xlviii, a. 2, ad. 1.

[32] Ephes. ii, 4-7; cf. Rom. vi, 4; Col. ii, 12-13.

[33] . . . *Cum uno et eodem actu Deus praedestinaverit ipsum et nos.* III, q. xxiv, a. 4.

[34] *Tract. in Joan.* xxi, 8-9. And in another place: *Secum nos faciens unum hominem caput et corpus.—Enarrat. in Ps.* lxxxv, c. 1. And again: *Unus homo caput et corpus, unus homo Christus et Ecclesia, vir perfectus.—Enarrat. in Ps.* xviii, c. 10.

Yes, let us thank Jesus Christ for associating us so intimately with His life; all is common to us in Him: merits, interests, all the riches of grace, beatitude, glory. Let us henceforward be members who do not condemn ourselves, by sin, to become dead members. But rather, by the grace which comes from Him, by our virtues modelled upon His, by our holiness which is but a participation in His, let us be members full of supernatural life and beauty, members in whom Christ may be glorified.

And since "we are all one in Christ", since, under the same Head, we all live the same life of grace under the action of the same Spirit, although each member has a different function, let us remain united among ourselves, united also with those holy souls who, in Heaven as glorious members and in Purgatory as suffering members, form with us but one body: *Ut unum sint.* This is the consoling dogma of the *Communion of Saints.*

With St. Paul, the "Saints" are those who belong to Christ, whether having received the crown, they already have their place in the eternal Kingdom, or whether they are still fighting here below. But all these members belong to a single body, for the Church is one. They have solidarity with one another, all is common among them. "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it."[35] The good of one member profits the entire body, and the glory of the body reflects on each of its members.[36] What a perspective this thought opens out upon our responsibilities! . . . What an ardent source of apostolate! Therefore St. Paul exhorts each of us to labour until we attain to the perfection of the mystical body: *Donec occurramus omnes in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi.*[37]

For this it is necessary that we not only remain united to Christ Who is the Head, but also that we should be most careful "to keep the unity of the Spirit (the Spirit of love) in the bond of peace". *Solliciti servare unitatem Spiritus in vinculo pacis.*[38]

This was the supreme wish of Christ at the moment of achieving His mission here below: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee . . . that they may be made perfect in one."[39] "For," says St. Paul, "you are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus . . . there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor

[35] I Cor. xii, 26.

[36] *Sicut in corpore naturali operatio unius membri cedit in bonum totius corporis, ita et in corpore spirituali, scilicet Ecclesia, quia omnes fideles sunt unum corpus, bonum unius alteri communicatur.* St. Thom. *Opuse.* vii. *Expositio Symboli,* c. xiii; cf. I-II, q. xxi, a. 3.

[37] Ephes. iv, 13. [38] Ephes, iv, 3. [39] Joan. xvii, 21-23.

free."[40] We are all one in Christ. Unity in God, in Christ, and through Christ, that is the ultimate term: "that God may be all in all".[41]

St. Paul, who puts the union of Christ and His Church in such strong relief, could not fail to tell us something of the final glory of the mystical body of Jesus. He tells us,[42] that on the day fixed by the Divine decrees, when the mystical body will have arrived "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ", then will dawn the triumph which is to consecrate for ever the union of the Church and of its Head. Associated until then so intimately with the life of Jesus, the Church now completed will be glorified with Him.[43] The Resurrection triumphs over death, the last enemy to be overcome; then the elect, being all at last united under their Divine Head, Christ, He will present to His Father this society, no longer imperfect, nor militant in the midst of miseries, temptations and struggles; no longer suffering the fire of expiation, but henceforth transfigured and glorious in all its members.

What a grand sight it will be to see Jesus Christ offer to the Eternal Father these glorious and innumerable trophies, proclaiming the power of His grace, the kingdom won by His Blood shining with purest splendour, fruit of the Divine life which flows full and inebriating in each of the Saints!

We can well understand how, in the Apocalypse, St. John, having foreseen some of these marvels and these joys, compares them, after the example of Jesus Himself, to a marriage feast, "the marriage of the Lamb".[44] We can well understand too, how, in order to bring to a fitting close this mysterious description of the heavenly Jerusalem, the same Apostle repeats the ardent aspiration that Christ and the Church, the Bridegroom and the Bride, ceaselessly repeat to each other while awaiting the hour of final consummation and perfect union: "Come!"[45]

[40] Gal. iii, 26. [41] I Cor. xv, 28. [42] Ibid. 24-28.
[43] II Tim. ii, 12; Rom. viii, 17. [44] Matth. xxii, 2; Apoc. xix, 9.
[45] Apoc. xxii, 16-17.

VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE SPIRIT OF JESUS

SUMMARY. The doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit completes the exposition of the Divine Plan: capital importance of this subject. I. The Holy Spirit *in the Trinity:* He proceeds from the Father and the Son *through love;* the work of *sanctification* is appropriated to Him because it is a *work of love,* of achievement and union. II. Operations of the Holy Spirit *in Christ:* Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit; sanctifying grace, virtues and gifts bestowed upon the Soul of Christ: The *human activity* of Christ *directed by the Holy Spirit.* III. Operations of the Holy Spirit *in the Church;* the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Church. IV. The action of the Holy Spirit *in the souls* He dwells in. V. In particular, the doctrine of the *gifts of the Holy Spirit.* VI. *Our devotion* to the Holy Spirit: to invoke Him and be faithful to His inspirations.

AMONG the books of the Sacred Scriptures, we have under the title of the *Acts of the Apostles* the history of the first days of the Church. This account, due to the pen of St. Luke, who witnessed many of the facts he relates, is full of charm and life. We see in it how the Church, founded by Jesus upon the Apostles, developed in Jerusalem, and then extended gradually beyond Judea, chiefly owing to the preaching of St. Paul. The greater part of this book records the missions, labours and struggles of the great Apostle. We are able to follow him in nearly every stage of his evangelical career. These pages taken from life reveal to us what incessant tribulations St. Paul endured, what numberless difficulties he encountered, the adventures that befell him, the sufferings he bore during the many journeys he undertook for the spreading abroad of the name and glory of Jesus.

It is recounted in these *Acts* that when, in the course of his missions, St. Paul came to Ephesus, he met there with some disciples and asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" The disciples replied: "We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost."[1]

We are certainly not ignorant of the existence of the Holy Ghost. Yet how many Christians there are nowadays who only know His name

[1] Act. xix, 2.

and hardly anything of His work in souls! However the Divine economy cannot be perfectly conceived unless we have as clear an idea as possible of what the Holy Ghost is for us.

In almost every text where St. Paul exposes the eternal designs concerning our supernatural adoption, and whenever he speaks of grace or of the Church, he speaks at the same time of "the Spirit of God", "the Spirit of Christ" or "the Spirit of Jesus". "We have received the Spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba (Father)!"[2] "God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into our Hearts" so that we may call God our Father.[3] "Know you not", he says elsewhere, "that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"[4] And again: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you?": *An nescitis quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti, qui in vobis est?*[5] It is in Christ that all the well ordered edifice is raised to form a holy temple in the Lord; it is in Him that we are to be made, through the Holy Spirit, a temple which God inhabits.[6] So that as we form but one body in Christ, so we are all animated by one Spirit: *Unum corpus et unus Spiritus.*[7] The presence of this Spirit in our souls is so necessary that St. Paul says: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His", *Si quis Spiritum Christi non habet, hic non est ejus.*[8]

You now understand why the Apostle, who longed for nothing so much as to see Christ live in the souls of his disciples, asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost. It was because they only are God's children, in Jesus Christ, who are led by the Spirit of God: *Quicumque enim Spiritu Dei aguntur, hi sunt filii Dei.*

We shall only perfectly grasp the mystery of Christ and the economy of our sanctification, if we fix our attention upon this Divine Spirit and His action within us. We have seen that the aim of all our life is to enter with great humility into God's thoughts and to adapt ourselves to them as perfectly as possible with childlike simplicity. These thoughts being divine, their efficacy is intrinsically absolute. They infallibly produce fruits of sanctification, if we accept them with faith and love. Now, to enter into the Divine Plan, we must not only receive Christ,[9] but, as St. Paul points out, we must also "receive the Holy Spirit" and be submissive to His action so as to be "one with Christ".

Consider Our Lord Himself. In that wonderful discourse after the Last Supper, when he reveals to those He calls His "friends" the

[2] Rom. viii, 15. [3] Gal. iv, 6. [4] I Cor. iii, 16. [5] Ibid. vi, 19.
[6] Ephes. ii, 21-22. [7] Ibid. iv, 4. [8] Rom. viii, 9. [9] Joan. i, 12.

secrets of the Eternal life He brings them, He speaks of the Holy Spirit almost as often as He does of His Father. He tells them that this Spirit will take His place amongst them when He shall have ascended into Heaven; that this Spirit will be for them the Master of their inner life, a Master so necessary that Jesus Himself prays to His Father that this Spirit may be given to them and may abide in them.

And why should our Divine Saviour have been so intent on speaking of the Holy Spirit at this solemn hour and have done so in such pressing words, if what He tells us was to remain for us a dead letter? Would it not be to do Him a wrong and cause great detriment to ourselves, if it were to pass over in silence a mystery so vital for us?[10]

I will therefore try to show you, as clearly as I can, what the Holy Spirit is in Himself in the Adorable Trinity;—His action over the Sacred Humanity of Christ;—and the ceaseless benefits He brings to the Church and to souls.

We shall thus complete the exposition of the Divine economy considered in itself.

Without doubt, this subject is a very deep one, and we ought only to treat of it with profound reverence; but since our Lord has revealed it to us, our faith ought also to consider it with love and confidence. Let us humbly ask the Holy Spirit Himself to enlighten our souls with a ray of His divine light. He will assuredly hear our prayer.

I

All we know about the Holy Ghost is what has been taught us by Revelation. And what has it taught us?

It belongs to the Infinite Essence to be one God in Three Persons: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. That is the mystery of the Holy Trinity.[11] Faith confesses in God both unity of nature and distinction of Persons.

[10] In his Encyclical upon the Holy Spirit (*Divinum illud munus,* May 9th 1897), Leo XIII, of glorious memory, bitterly deplores that "Christians have only a very poor knowledge of the Holy Ghost. They often use His name in their spiritual exercises, but their faith is encompassed with great darkness." The great Pontiff likewise energetically insists that "all preachers and those who have charge of souls, should consider it as a duty to teach the people carefully and at length, *diligentius atque uberius,* concerning the Holy Ghost". Doubtless he wishes "all subtle controversy to be avoided as well as all rash attempt to pry into the deep nature of the mystery", but it is also his wish "that the many and great benefits the Divine Giver has brought and ever brings to our souls should be recalled and clearly shown forth; for error or ignorance concerning these great and fruitful mysteries (error and ignorance unworthy of children of light), ought totally to disappear": *prorsus depellatus.*

[11] *Fides autem catholica haec est: ut unum Deum in Trinitate et Trinitatem in unitate veneremur . . . neque confudentes personas, neque substantiam separantes.* Creed attributed to St. Athanasius.

The Father, in knowing Himself, declares and expresses this knowledge in the Infinite Word; this act is simple and eternal; and the Son, begotten of the Father, is like and equal to Him, because the Father communicates to the Son His nature, life and perfections.

The Father and Son are drawn to one another by a common and mutual love: the Father is of such absolute perfection and beauty, the Son is so perfect an image of His Father! Thus each gives Himself to the Other, and this mutual love which springs from the Father and the Son as from one source is, in God, a subsisting love, a Person distinct from the other two Persons, named the Holy Ghost. This name is mysterious, but Revelation gives us no other.

The Holy Ghost is the ultimate term in the interior operations of the Divine life: He achieves, if we may thus lisp in speaking of such mysteries, the cycle of intimate activity in the Holy Trinity. But like the Father and the Son, He is God; He possesses, like Them and with Them, one and the same Divine nature, equal knowledge, equal power, equal majesty, equal goodness.

This Divine Spirit is named Holy,[12] He is the Spirit of Holiness; holy in Himself, He makes holy. In announcing the mystery of the Incarnation, the Angel said to the Virgin: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee . . . and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God", *Ideoque et quod nascetur ex te sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei.*[13] Works of sanctification are especially attributed to the Holy Spirit. To understand this and all that will be said of the Holy Spirit, I must explain briefly what is called in theology *appropriation*.

As you know, there is *in God,* only one intelligence, only one will, only one power, because there is only one Divine nature; but also there is distinction of persons. This distinction results from the mysterious *operations* that are accomplished *in the intimate life of God* and from the mutual relations derived from these operations. The Father begets the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. "To beget, to be a Father", is the exclusive property of the First Person; "to be Son" is the personal property of the Son, as "to proceed from the Father and the Son by way of love", is the personal property of the Holy Ghost. These personal properties establish the mutual relations between the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, from whence the distinction arises. But setting apart these properties and

[12] See above p. 11, note 2, what we have said of sanctity in the Holy Trinity and the reason for which, according to St. Thomas, the Spirit is named *holy*.

[13] Luc. i, 35.

these relations, all is common to the Three Persons and indivisible among them: the same intelligence, the same will, the same power, the same majesty, because the same indivisible Divine nature is common to the Three Persons. That is what we may know of the intimate operations in God.

As to what concerns the "exterior" works, the actions accomplished *outside God,* whether in the material world, as the action of directing every creature towards its end, or in the world of souls, such as the action of producing grace, these are common to the three Divine Persons. Why so? Because the source of these operations, works and actions is the Divine nature and this Divine nature is, for the Three Persons, one and indivisible; the Holy Trinity acts in the world as one and the same Cause. But it is God's will that men should confess and honour not only the Divine Unity but also the Trinity of Persons. That is why the Church, for example in her liturgy, attributes to one or the other of the Divine Persons certain actions which are produced in the world and, although common to the Three Persons, have a special relation or an intimate affinity with the place, if I may so speak, which this Person occupies in the Holy Trinity and with the attributes which are particularly and exclusively His own.

Thus, the Father being the source, origin and principle of the two other Persons—without this implying either hierarchical superiority or priority of time—the works produced in the world that especially manifest power or the character of origin are attributed to the Father. For example, the creation by which God drew the universe out of nothing. We sing in the *Credo:* "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth." Had therefore the Father a greater part, did He manifest more power in this work than the Son and Holy Ghost? No, it would be an error to suppose so; the Son and the Holy Ghost acted in this as much as the Father, for God works eternally by His almighty power, and almighty power is common to the Three Persons. Why then does the Holy Church speak after this manner? Because in the Holy Trinity the Father is the *first* Person, the Principle without principle, whence proceed the two other Persons. This is His exclusive personal property distinguishing Him from the Son and Holy Ghost, and it is in order that we may not forget this property that the "exterior" actions which, by affinity of nature, place it in relief, are attributed to the Father.

It is the same for the Person of the Son. He is, in the Holy Trinity, the Word proceeding from the Father by way of intelligence; He is the Infinite expression of the Divine Thought; He is above all con-

sidered as Eternal Wisdom. That is why those works in which wisdom especially shines forth are attributed to Him.

It is again the same for the Holy Ghost. What is He in the Holy Trinity? He is the ultimate term of the Divine operations, of the life of God in Himself; He closes, so to speak, the cycle of the intimate Divine life: it is His personal property to proceed from both the Father and the Son by way of love. This is why, all that is a work of achievment, of perfection, all that is a work of love, of union and consequently of holiness—for our holiness is measured by our degree of union with God— is attributed to the Holy Ghost. Is it because He sanctifies more than the Father and the Son? No, the work of our sanctification is common to the Three Divine Persons; but, once again, as the work of sanctification in the soul is a work of perfecting, of achievement and union, it is attributed to the Holy Ghost because in this way we more easily remember what are His personal properties so as to honour and adore Him in that which distinguishes Him from the Father and the Son.

God wills that we should have it as much at heart to honour His Trinity of Persons as to adore His Unity of Nature, and therefore He wills that the Church, even in her language, should recall to the minds of her children not only that there is but one God but also that He is in Three Persons.

This is what is called *appropriation*. It is founded on Revelation; it is employed by the Church;[14] it has for its aim to place in relief the attributes proper to each Divine Person. In doing this, it makes these properties known to us and makes us love them more. St. Thomas says it is to help our faith that the Church, following Revelation in this, observes the law of appropriation: *Ad manifestationem fidei.*[15] During all eternity, our life, our beatitude will be to contemplate God, to love and enjoy Him, as He truly is, that is to say in the Unity of His nature and the Trinity of His Persons. What is there astonishing in the fact that God, Who predestines us to this life and prepares this beatitude for us, should will that, even here below, we should remember His Divine perfections as much those of His nature as the properties that distinguish the Persons. God is infinite and worthy of praise in His Unity, He is equally so in His Trinity; and the Divine Persons are as admirable in the unity of nature which they possess in an indivisible manner, as in the relations They have with each Other and on which Their distinction is founded.

"Almighty God, Eternal God, Blessed God, I rejoice in Thy

[14] In his Encyclical letter of May 9th 1897, Leo XIII says how aptly this is done by the Church, *aptissime*.

[15] I, q. xxxix, a. 7.

Almighty Power, Thy Eternity and Thy Blessedness. When shall I behold Thee, O Principle without principle! When shall I behold Thy Son, equal to Thyself, coming forth from Thy bosom! When shall I behold Thy Holy Spirit proceeding from this union, being the term of Thy fruitfulness and consummating Thy Eternal action!"[16]

II

You will now have no difficulty in understanding the language of the Scriptures and of the Church when they speak of the operations of the Holy Ghost.

Let us first consider these operations in Our Lord. Let us reverently approach the Divine Person of Jesus Christ that we may contemplate something of the marvels realized in Him, in the Incarnation and since the Incarnation.

As I have said to you when explaining this mystery, the Holy Trinity created a soul which it united to a human body so as to form one human nature, and united this human nature to the Divine Person of the Word. The Three Divine Persons concurred together in this ineffable work, although it is necessary to add immediately that it had for its final term, the Word alone; only the Word, the Son, became Incarnate.[17] This work is then due to the entire Trinity, but it is especially attributed to the Holy Ghost; and this is what we say in the Creed: "I believe . . . in Jesus Christ Our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Ghost . . ." The *Credo* only repeats the words of the Angel to the Virgin: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee . . . and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

You will perhaps ask why this special attribution to the Holy Spirit? Because, among other reasons given by St. Thomas,[18] the Holy Spirit is substantial love, the love of the Father and the Son; now if the Redemption through the Incarnation is a work of which the fulfilment demanded infinite wisdom, it has however its first cause in God's love for us. "God so loved the world", Jesus Himself told us, "as to give His only begotten Son": *Sic Deus dilexit mundum ut Filium suum Unigenitum daret.*[19]

[16] Bossuet, *Preparation for Death*, 4th prayer.

[17] To employ an image given by certain Fathers of the Church, a person in putting on his vestments is helped in this action by two other persons: all three concur in the accomplishment of this action, but only one is adorned in these vestments. This image is necessarily only an imperfect comparison.

[18] III, q. xxxii, a. 1. [19] Joan. iii, 16.

And think how fruitful and wonderful the virtue of the Holy Spirit is in Christ! Not only does He unite the human nature to the Word but to Him is attributed the effusion of sanctifying grace in the soul of Jesus.

In Jesus Christ there are two distinct natures, both perfect, but united in the Person who embraces them, namely, the Word. It is the "grace of union" that causes human nature to subsist in the Divine Person of the Word; this grace is of an altogether unique, transcendent and incommunicable order; through it, the humanity of Christ belongs to the Word; it has become the humanity of the true Son of God and the object of the Eternal Father's infinite delight. But the human nature, while being thus united to the Word, is not annihilated and does not remain in immobility: it retains its essence, its integrity, as likewise its energies and capacities; it is capable of action; now, it is "sanctifying grace" that raises this human nature so that it can act supernaturally.

To state the same idea in other terms, the grace of hypostatic union unites the human nature to the Person of the Word and thus renders everything divine in Christ; Christ *is* by this grace a divine "subject"; this is the work of the grace of union of which the character is unique. But it is befitting that this human nature should also be adorned with "sanctifying grace" in order to *operate* divinely in each of its faculties. This sanctifying grace which is connatural to the "grace of union" (that is to say which is derived from the grace of union in a manner as it were natural) places the soul of Christ in the state befitting its union with the Word;[20] this is done in such a way that the human nature—which subsists in the Word by virtue of the "grace of union"—can act as befits a soul raised to so eminent a dignity, and can produce Divine fruit.

And that is why sanctifying grace has not been given to the soul of Christ in a limited measure as it is with the elect, but carried to its highest degree: *Et vidimus eum* PLENUM GRATIAE. Now the pouring forth of this sanctifying grace in the soul of Christ is attributed to the Holy Spirit.[21]

[20] *Gratia habitualis Christi intelligitur ut consequens unionem hypostaticam, sicut splendor solem.* St. Thom. III, q. viii, a. 13.

[21] Therefore, in Christ, the effect of the "grace of union" of which the object is the union of the human nature with the Person of the Word, is different from the effect of "sanctifying grace"; the latter gives the capacity of acting supernaturally to this human nature, which remains (even after the union with the Word is accomplished) integral in its essence and faculties. Therefore this sanctifying grace, being distinct from the grace of union, is not superfluous, as might appear at first sight. (St. Thom. III, q. vii, a. 1 a. 13). Cf. Schwalm, *Le Christ d'après St. Thomas d'Aquin.*

It is also to be observed that the "grace of union" is only to be found in Christ, whilst sanctifying grace is likewise in the souls of the just. In Christ sanctifying grace

At the same time, the Holy Spirit has poured forth on the soul of Jesus the fulness of the virtues[22] and the fulness of His gifts: *Et requiescet super eum Spiritus Domini.*[23] Hear what Isaias sang of the Virgin and of the Christ Who was to be born of her: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse (that is the Virgin) and a flower shall rise up out of his root (Christ). And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord."

In a remarkable circumstance related by St. Luke, Our Lord applied to Himself this text of the prophet. You know that at the time of Christ, the Jews assembled in the synagogue on the Sabbath day; a doctor of the law chosen from among those present took the scroll of the Scriptures to read the part of the sacred text appointed for that day. St. Luke relates how, one Sabbath day, Our Divine Lord, then at the beginning of His public life, entered the synagogue of Nazareth. The book of the Prophet Isaias was given into His hands and, having unfolded it, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, wherefore He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Having folded the book, he restored it and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. Then He said to them: "This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears."[24] Our Lord made His own the words of Isaias which compared the action of the Holy Spirit to an unction.[25] The grace of the Holy Spirit is poured forth upon Jesus, like an oil of gladness which first anointed Him Son of God and the Messias, and then filled Him with the plentitude of His gifts and the abundance of divine treasures: *Unxit te Deus oleo laetitiae prae consortibus tuis.*[26] It was at the very moment of the Incarnation that this blessed unction was conferred: and it was to signify this, to manfest it to the Jews, to proclaim that He is the Messais, the Christ, that is to say the Lord's Anointed, that the Holy

is in all its fulness and it is of this fulness that all receive it in a more or less extensive measure. But it is above all necessary to observe that Christ is not the adoptive Son of God such as we become by sanctifying grace. He is the Son of God by nature. In us, sanctifying grace establishes divine adoption; in Christ, the function of sanctifying grace is to act in such a way that the human nature of Christ—once united to the Person of the Word by the grace of union and become, by this same grace, the Humanity of the very Son of God—is able to work in a supernatural manner.

[22] See above p.38. [23] Isa. xi, 2. [24] Luc. iv, 16 a. sq.

[25] In the Liturgy (Hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*) the Holy Spirit is called *Spiritalis unctio.*

[26] Ps. xliv, 5. Cf. Act. x, 38: *Jesum a Nazareth, quomodo unxit Deus Spiritu Sancto.* See also Matth. xii, 18.

Spirit visibly descended upon Jesus under the form of a dove on the day of His baptism when the Incarnate Word was about to begin His public life. It was indeed by this sign that Christ was to be recognized as was declared by His Precursor, St. John the Baptist: "He upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending . . . He it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."[27]

From this moment, the Evangelists show us that in all things the Soul of Christ is directed by the Holy Spirit and His activity inspired by Him. It is the Holy Spirit Who leads Him into the desert to be tempted: *Ductus est in desertum a Spiritu ut tentaretur a diabolo.*[28] After His sojourn in the desert it is "in the power of the Spirit"[29] that He returns into Galilee; by the action of this same Spirit, He casts out devils from the bodies of those possessed;[30] it is under the action of the Holy Spirit that He rejoices when He thanks His Father for revealing His Divine secrets to little ones: *In ipsa hora exsultavit Spiritu Sancto.*[31] Finally, St. Paul tells us that in the chief work of Christ, the one in which His love for His Father and for us most shines out—namely his bloody sacrifice upon the cross for the salvation of the world—it was by the Holy Ghost Christ offered Himself: *Qui per Spiritum Sanctum semetipsum obtulit immaculatum Deo.*[32]

What do all these revelations show? That in Christ, the human activity was directed by the Spirit of love. The One Who acts is Christ, the Incarnate Word. All His actions are the actions of the One Person of the Word in Whom the human nature subsists; but it is under the inspiration, by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, that Christ acted. The human soul of Jesus had, through the grace of the hypostatic union, become the soul of the Word; it was filled like to none other with sanctifying grace, and lastly, it acted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

And this is why all the actions of Christ Jesus were holy. Certainly His soul is created, like every soul; but it is all-holy, first because it is united to the Word; it is thus constituted, from the first moment of the Incarnation, in a state of union with a Divine Person which makes it not merely the soul of a saint, but of the Saint of saints, the very Son of God: *Quod nascetur ex te sanctum vocabitur Filius Dei.* It is holy too, because it is adorned with sanctifying grace which makes it capable of acting supernaturally, and in a manner worthy of the supreme union which constitutes its inalienable privilege. In fine, it is holy because all its actions, all its operations, although being and remaining the actions of the one Incarnate Word, are wrought through the move-

[27] Joan. i, 33. [28] Matth. iv, 1. [29] Luc. iv, 14.
[30] Matth. xii, 28. [31] Luc. x, 21. [32] Hebr. ix, 14.

ment, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of Holiness.

Let us adore these marvels produced in Christ: the Holy Spirit renders holy the being and activity of Christ; and because, in Christ, this holiness attains the supreme degree, because all human holiness is to be modelled upon it and must be subject to it, the Church sings daily: *Tu solus sanctus, Jesu Christe,* "Thou only art holy", O Christ Jesus. Only Thou art holy because only Thou art by Thy Incarnation the true Son of God; only holy, because Thou possessest sanctifying grace in its fulness that so Thou mayest distribute it to us; only holy because Thy soul was infinitely docile to the promptings of the Spirit of Love Who inspired and ruled all Thy movements, all Thy acts and made them pleasing to Thy Father: *Et requiesclet super eum Spiritus Domini.*

III

These marvels which were operated in Christ under the inspiration of the Spirit, are reproduced in us, at least in part, when we allow ourselves to be guided by this Divine Spirit. But do we possess this Spirit? Yes, without any doubt.

Before ascending into Heaven, Jesus promised His disciples that He would ask the Father to give them the Holy Spirit. He made the gift of this Spirit to our souls the object of a special prayer: *Rogabo Patrem, et alium Paraclitum dabit vobis, Spiritum veritatis.*[33] And you know how the prayer of Jesus was granted and how abundantly the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. This marvel marked, as it were, the taking possession of the Church, Christ's mystical body, by the Divine Spirit. We may say that if Christ is the Chief, the Head of the Church, the Holy Spirit is the soul of it. It is the Holy Spirit Who guides and inspires the Church, keeping her, as Jesus said, in the truth of Christ and in the light He has brought to us: *Docebit vos omnem veritatem et suggeret vobis omnia quaecumque dixero vobis.*[34]

This action of the Holy Spirit in the Church is varied and manifold. I have said above that Christ was anointed the Messias and High Priest by an ineffable unction of the Holy Spirit; all those whom Christ wills to make participants of His priestly power that so they may continue here below His sanctifying mission, are made partakers of it by the unction of the Holy Spirit: *Accipite Spiritum Sanctum . . . Spiritus Sanctus posuit episcopos regere Ecclesiam Dei.*[35] It is this Holy Spirit who

[33] Joan. xiv, 16, 17. [34] Ibid. 26. [35] Ibid. xx, 22; Act. xx, 28.

speaks by their mouth and gives value to their testimony.[36] In the same way, the authentic means that Christ has given to His ministers, whereby they may transmit life to souls, namely the Sacraments, are never conferred without the Holy Spirit being invoked. It is He Who fructifies the waters of baptism;[37] it is necessary to "be born again of water and the Holy Ghost to enter into the Kingdom of God";[38] St. Paul says that God saves us "by the laver of regeneration" in renewing us by the Holy Ghost.[39] In Confirmation, the Holy Ghost is "given" to be the unction which is to make the Christian a valiant soldier of Jesus Christ; it is the Holy Ghost Who, in this sacrament, gives us the fulness of the state of Christian and clothes us in Christ's own strength. It is to the Holy Ghost, as is especially shown in the Eastern liturgy, that the change is attributed whereby the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Sins are forgiven, in the Sacrament of Penance, by the Holy Ghost.[40] In Extreme Unction, He is besought that His grace may cure the sick of their languors and sins. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Holy Ghost is invoked in order that the Christian bridegroom and bride may, by their lives, imitate the union that exists between Christ and the Church.

Do you not see how full of life, how penetrating and constant, is the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church? Yes, He is indeed, as St. Paul says, "the Spirit of Life",[41] a truth the Church repeats in her *Credo* when she chants her faith in "the Holy Ghost . . . the life-giver": *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum . . .* VIVIFICANTEM; He is truly the soul of the Church, He is the vital principle animating and governing her, uniting all her members one with another and giving them spiritual strength and beauty.[42]

In the first days of the Church's existence, this action was much more visible than in our own days; it entered into the designs of Providence, for it was necessary that the Church should be firmly established by manifesting, in the sight of the pagan world, striking signs of the Divinity of her Founder, of her origin and mission. These signs, the fruits of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, were wonderful. We marvel when we read the account of the beginnings of the Church.

[36] Joan. xv, 26; Act. xv, 28; xx, 22-28.
[37] See further on, the conference on Baptism.
[38] Joan. iii, 5. [39] Tit. iii, 5.
[40] Joan. xx, 22-23. *Spiritus Sancti proprium est quod sit donum Patris et Filii; remissio autem peccatorum fit per Spiritum Sanctum tamquam per donum Dei.* St. Thom. III, q. iii, a. 8, ad. 3. The missal likewise says: *Ipse Spiritus Sanctus est remissio omnium peccatorum.* Feria III after Pentecost. See also the postcommunion of the prayer *pro petitione lacrymarum.* (*Orationes diversae.*)
[41] Rom. viii, 2. [42] See the note at the end of this conference.

The Holy Spirit descended upon those who through baptism were made Christ's disciples. He filled them with "charismata" as numerous as they were astonishing: graces of miracles, gifts of prophecy, gifts of tongues and many other extraordinary favours granted to the first Christians in order that the Church, adorned with such an abundance of eminent gifts, might be recognized as the true Church of Jesus. Read in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians how the great Apostle rejoices in enumerating these marvels of which he was himself a witness; and at almost each enumeration of these various gifts, he adds: but it is "the same Spirit" Who is the source of them, because He is Love and love is the principle of all these gifts. *In eodem Spiritu.*[43] He it is Who makes fruitful this Church which Jesus has redeemed by His blood that it might "be holy and without blemish."[44]

IV

If the visible and extraordinary character of the effects of the workings of the Holy Spirit have in great part disappeared, the action of this Divine Spirit ever continues in souls and is not the less wonderful for now being chiefly interior.

I have told you that holiness for us is nothing else than the complete unfolding, the full development of that first grace of our divine adoption, that grace given at baptism by which we become children of God and brethren of Christ Jesus. The substance of all holiness is to draw from this initial grace of adoption all the treasures and graces which it contains and that God causes to flow from it. Christ is the Model of our divine filiation. He has moreover merited that it should be given to us, and He Himself has established the means whereby it should come to us.

But the fruition within us of this grace, rendered possible by Jesus, is the work of the Holy Trinity; it is however, and not without motive, especially attributed to the Holy Spirit. Why is this? Always for the same reason. This grace of adoption is purely gratuitous and has its source in love: *Videte qualem caritatem dedit nobis Pater ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.*[45] Now, in the adorable Trinity, the Holy Spirit is substantial Love. St. Paul tells us that "the charity of God" (that is to say the grace that makes us children of God) "is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost": *Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum, qui datus est nobis.*[46]

And from the moment of the infusion of grace in us by baptism,

[43] I Cor. xii, q. 9. [44] Ephes. v, 27. [45] I Joan. iii, 1. [46] Rom. v, 5.

the Holy Ghost abides in us with the Father and the Son. "If anyone love Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make our abode with him", *Ad eum veniemus et* MANSIONEM *apud eum faciemus.*[47] Grace makes our soul the temple of the Holy Trinity. Our soul adorned with grace is truly the abode of God; He dwells within us, not merely as He does in all things, by His essence and His power, by which He sustains and preserves every creature in existence, but in an altogether special and intimate manner as being the object of supernatural knowledge and love. And because grace thus unites us to God, because it is the principle and measure of our charity, it is especially the Holy Spirit who is said "to dwell within us", not in a manner that is personal to Him to the exclusion of the Father and the Son, but because He proceeds through love and it is He who unites the Father and the Son: *Apud vos manebit et in vobis erit, said Our Lord.*[48] Every man, even a sinner, still possesses in himself the vestiges of divine power and wisdom; the just alone, those who are in a state of grace, are partakers of the supernatural charity which is like the exclusive sign of the Holy Spirit. This is why St. Paul, speaking to the faithful, says to them: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who is in you, Whom you have from God?" *An nescitis quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti qui in vobis est, quem habetis a Deo?*[49]

And what is it this Divine Spirit does in our souls? For being God, being Love, He does not remain inactive. First of all, He gives testimony that we are the children of God: *Ipse Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro, quod sumus filii Dei;*[50] He is the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of Holiness, Whose will it is, because He loves us, to give us a share in His holiness that we may be true and worthy children of God.

With sanctifying grace which, so to speak, deifies our nature and renders it capable of acting supernaturally, the Holy Spirit places within us forces, "habits", which raise the faculties of the soul to a divine level. These are the supernatural virtues, above all the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which are, properly speaking, the virtues characteristic of our state as children of God: next there are the infused moral virtues which help us in the combat against the obstacles that are opposed to the development of the divine life within us.

Lastly there are the gifts: *Dona Spiritus Sancti.* Let us stay a few

[47] Joan. xiv, 23. [48] Joan. xiv, 17. [49] I Cor. vi, 19. [50] Rom. viii, 16.

moments to consider them. Our Divine Saviour, Who is Our Model, received them, as we have seen, but in a transcendent and eminent manner. The measure of the gifts in us is limited; however this measure still remains so fruitful that it produces marvels of holiness in souls where these gifts abound. Why is this? Because it is chiefly by them that our state of adoption is especially brought to perfection as we are about to see.

What then are the gifts of the Holy Spirit? They are benefits, as the name indicates, that the Spirit gratuitously distributes to us with sanctifying grace and the infused virtues. In her liturgy, the Church tells us that the Holy Spirit is Himself the highest Gift: *Donum Dei altissimi;*[51] for He descends into us even from the moment of baptism to give Himself as the object of love. But this gift is divine and living. He is a Guest Who, full of liberality, wishes to enrich the soul that receives Him. Being Himself the uncreated Gift, He is the source of the created gifts which, with sanctifying grace and the infused virtues, fully enable the soul to live supernaturally in a perfect manner.

Indeed even supplied with grace and the infused virtues, our soul is not re-established in that original integrity in which Adam was before the Fall. Reason, itself subject to error, sees its power of sovereignty disputed by the inferior appetites and the senses; the will is prone to weakness. What follows from this state? It follows that in the principal work of our sanctification, we are under the necessity of being constantly and directly aided by the Holy Spirit. He provides for this by His inspirations which all go to perfect, to achieve, our sanctity. And in order that these inspirations may be well received, He Himself places in our souls the dispositions that render us docile and pliable; these are the gifts of the Holy Ghost.[52]

The gifts therefore are not of themselves inspirations of the Holy Ghost, but dispositions which cause us to obey these inspirations promptly and easily.

By these gifts, the soul is made capable of being moved and directed in the path of supernatural perfection and of divine filiation; it possesses, as it were, a supernatural tact, a divine instinct of spiritual things. The soul that, in virtue of these dispositions, lets itself be guided by the Spirit, acts in all security as becomes a child of God. In all its spiritual life, it thinks and acts "supernaturally to the point" if

[51] Hymn *Veni Creator*.

[52] In Christ Jesus, the presence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost does not proceed from the necessity of aiding the weakness of the reason and will, Christ not being subject to any error or any weakness. These gifts were bestowed upon the soul of Jesus because they constitute a perfection, and it is befitting that every perfection should be in Christ. We have seen above the influence that the Holy Ghost exercises by His gifts in the soul of Jesus.

I may thus express myself.[53] You will at once see that the gifts place and dispose the soul to move in an atmosphere where *all* is supernatural, where nothing natural, so to speak, is mingled. By His gifts, the Holy Spirit holds and reserves to Himself the supreme direction of all our supernatural conduct.

And this is a most important point for us, our holiness being of an essentially supernatural order. By the virtues, the soul in a state of grace acts supernaturally, it is true; but it acts in a manner conformable to its rational and human condition as likewise by its own movement and initiative. By the gifts it is disposed to act directly and solely under the divine impulsion (whilst keeping, of course, its liberty which is manifested by acquiescence to the inspiration from on high), and this in a manner which does not always fit in with its rational, natural way of seeing and considering things. The influence of the gifts is then, in a very real sense, superior to that of the virtues;[54] it is true that the gifts do not supply the place of the virtues but they marvellously complete their operations. For example, the gifts of understanding and knowledge perfect the exercise of the virtue of faith; this explains why souls, simple and uncultured, but upright and docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, have a certitude, a comprehension of supernatural things and a penetration into them that is sometimes astonishing; they have a spiritual instinct which warns them of error and makes them hold to the revealed truth with a singular assurance protecting them from all doubts. Whence does this arrive? From study? From deep examination into the truths of their faith? No, from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth who by the gift of understanding or of knowledge perfects their virtue of faith.

As you see, the gifts constitute for the soul a perfection of great value on account of their exclusively supernatural character. They achieve the bringing to perfection of that wonderful supernatural organism by which God calls our souls to live by the Divine life. Granted to every soul in a state of grace, in a greater or lesser measure, the gifts remain in a permanent state as long as we do not drive out, by mortal sin, the Divine Guest Who is their source. As it is always possible for them to increase, they moreover extend to all our supernatural life which they make extremely fruitful because by them our souls are placed under the direct action or immediate influence of the Holy Spirit.

[53] *Dona sunt quaedam perfectiones hominis quibus homo disponitur ad hoc quod bene sequatur instinctum Spiritus Sancti.* St. Thom. I-II, q. lxviii, a. 3.

[54] *Dona a virtutibus distinguuntur in hoc quod virtutes perficiunt ad actus humano modo, sed dona ultra humanum modum.* St. Thom. *Sent.* III, dist. xxxiv, q, 1, a. 1. *Donorum ratio propria est ut per ea quis super humanum modum operetur. Sent.* III, dist. xxxv, q. 2, a. 3.

Now the Holy Spirit is God with the Father and the Son; He loves us with unspeakable love; He wills our sanctification; His inspirations, all proceeding from His goodness and love, have no other end than to mould us to a greater resemblance to Jesus. And this is why, although it is not their proper and exclusive function, the gifts even dispose us to those heroic acts by which holiness is powerfully manifested.

What ineffable goodness is that of our God Who supplies us so carefully and richly with all that is necessary for us in order to attain to Him! And would it not be doing a wrong to the Divine Guest of our souls if we were to doubt His goodness and love, to fail in confidence in His bounty and liberality or show ourselves heedless about profiting by them? . . .

V

Let us now say a word on each of the seven gifts. This number does not constitute a limit, for the action of God is infinite, but rather, like many other biblical numbers, it denotes plenitude. We shall simply follow the order indicated by Isaias in his messianic prophecy without seeking to establish a gradation or any carefully marked characteristics in the relations between the gifts; we will try to say, as far as we can, what belongs to each of them.

The first mentioned is that of *wisdom*. What does wisdom here signify? It is a *sapida cognitio rerum spiritualium*, a supernatual gift whereby to know or esteem Divine things by the spiritual taste with which the Holy Spirit inspires us. It is an intimate, a deep knowledge that relishes the things of God. We ask for it in the collect for the feast of Pentecost itself: *Da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere*. *Sapere* is to have not only the knowledge, but the relish for celestial and supernatural things; it is not—far from it—what is called sensible devotion, but a spiritual *experience* of what is Divine, that the Holy Spirit wills to produce within us. It is the response to the *Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus*. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet."[55] This gift makes us prefer, without any hesitation, the blessedness of God's service to all earthly joys; it is this gift which causes the soul to say: "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord! . . . better is one day in Thy courts above thousands of years away from Thee!"[56] But to experience this, we must carefully put away all that draws us towards the unlawful pleasures of the senses.

The gift of *understanding* makes us search deeply into the truths of

[55] Ps. xxxiii, 9. [56] Ps. lxxxiii, 2-11.

faith. St. Paul tells us that "God hath revealed them by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God".[57] Not that this gift diminishes the incomprehensibility of the mysteries or does away with faith; but it goes further into the mystery than the simple acquiescence of faith; it bears upon the appropriateness or the greatness of the mysteries, upon their relations with each other or with our supernatural life. It has also for its object, the truths contained in the Sacred Books, and it is this gift which seems to have been granted in a special measure to those in the Church who have shone by the depth of their doctrine, those whom we call "Doctors of the Church"; but every baptized soul possesses within itself this precious gift. You read a text of Holy Scripture; you have read and re-read it many times without having been struck by it; but, one day, a sudden light flashes, illuminating to its depths, so to speak, the truth set forth in this text; this truth then becomes altogether clear to you and often a principle of supernatural life and action. Is it by your reflections that you have arrived at this result? No, it is an illumination, and intuition of the Holy Spirit Who, by the gift of understanding, makes you penetrate further into the inmost and deep meaning of the revealed truths so that you may hold them the more firmly.

By the gift of *counsel,* the Holy Spirit responds to this prayer of the soul: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do!"[58] He keeps us from all precipitation, from all levity, but, above all, from all presumption, so dangerous in spiritual ways. A soul that only wishes to be guided by herself, who worships her own personality, acts without consulting God in prayer. She practically acts as if God was not for her the heavenly Father from Whom every light comes: Omne *donum perfectum desursum est, descendens a Patre luminum.*[59] Consider our Divine Saviour. He says, the Son, that is to say Himself, does nothing "but what He seeth the Father doing": *Non potest Filius a se facere quidquam nisi quod viderit Patrem facientem.*[60] The soul of Jesus contemplated the Father beholding in Him the model of His works; it was the Spirit of Counsel that showed Him the desires of the Father; that is why all that our Lord did was pleasing to His Father: *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper.*[61] It is a disposition whereby the child of God is enabled to judge of things according to principles above those of human wisdom. Sometimes, natural prudence, always limited, points out how to act in such or such a way; then, by the gift of counsel, the Holy Spirit shows higher principles of conduct which ought to direct the actions of the child of God.

It is not always enough for us to know God's good pleasure. Owing

[57] I Cor. ii, 10. [58] Act. ix, 6. [59] Jac. i, 17. [60] Joan. v, 19. [61] Ibid. viii, 29

to our fallen nature we often need strength to carry into effect what God requires of us; it is the Holy Spirit Who, by the gift of *fortitude,* sustains us in particularly difficult moments. There are pusillanimous souls that fear the trials of the inner life. It is impossible that these trials should be wanting; they are even so much the deeper in proportion as God calls us higher. But let us fear nothing: the Spirit of Fortitude is with us: *Apud vos manebit et in vobis erit.*[62] Like the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, we shall be, by the Holy Spirit, endowed with power from on high: *Virtute ex alto,*[63] so as to accomplish the Divine will generously, to obey, like the disciples, God rather than men, if the choice must be made;[64] to support valiantly the adversities we meet with as we come nearer to God. That is why St. Paul prayed so earnestly for the faithful of Ephesus that God would grant them "to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man".[65] The Holy Spirit says to such as he fills with fortitude, what God said to Moses when he shrank from the mission given to him of delivering the Hebrew people from the yoke of the Pharaohs: *Ego ero tecum*: Fear nothing, "I will be with thee".[66] Such a one is strong with the very strength of God. It is this strength that makes the martyrs and sustains the virgins. The world wonders to see them so courageous, because it imagines they find their strength in themselves, while in reality they draw it from God alone.

The gift of *knowledge* makes us see created things in a supernatural way as only a child of God can see them. There are many ways of considering what lies within us and around us. It is in a different manner that an unbeliever and one who believes in God contemplate creation. The unbeliever has only a purely natural knowledge, however wide and profound it may be; the child of God sees creation in the light of the Holy Spirit, as the work of God wherein His eternal Perfections are reflected. This gift makes us know created things, including ourselves, from God's point of view; it makes us know our supernatural end and the means of arriving at it, but with intuitions which preserve us from the false maxims of the world and the suggestions of the spirit of darkness.

The gifts of piety and of fear are the complement the one of the other. The gift of *Piety* is one of the most precious, because it concurs directly in regulating the attitude we ought to keep in our relations with God: the blending of adoration, respect and profound reverence towards the Divine Majesty; of love, confidence, tenderness, perfect abandonment and holy liberty in presence of Him who is our Heavenly

[62] Ibid. xvi, 17. [63] Ibid. xxiv, 49. [64] Act. iv, 19. [65] Ephes. iii, 16. [66] Exod. iii, 12.

Father. Far from excluding each other, these dispositions can be perfectly allied; but it is the Holy Spirit Who will teach us in what measure they are to be harmonized. In the same way, love and justice do not exclude one another in God. The gift of piety bears another fruit: it re-assures timid souls (there are such) who in dealing with God are afraid of not employing the right *formulae* in their prayers. This scruple is dispelled by the Holy Spirit when one listens to His inspirations. He is "the Spirit of Truth". If, says St. Paul, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought",[67] the Spirit is within us to help us; He prays in an ineffable manner which makes us cry towards God and be heard by Him.

Lastly there is the gift of *fear*. It seems strange, does it not? to find, in the Prophecy of Isaias, this expression: *Et replebit eum Spiritu timoris Domini*, "He shall be filled with the Spirit of fear". How can this be? How can Christ, the Son of God, be filled with the fear of God? It is because there are two kinds of fear of God: first there is the fear which thinks only of the chastisement due to sin; that is servile fear, wanting in nobility but not always without use. Then there is the fear which makes us avoid sin because it offends God; that is filial fear but it remains imperfect as long as the fear of punishment is mingled with it. It goes without saying that neither this imperfect fear nor servile fear had any place in Christ's all-holy soul: there was only perfect, reverential fear, the fear that the angelic powers have before the infinite perfection of God; *Tremunt potestates;*[68] the fear that evinces itself by adoration and is altogether holy: *Timor Domini sanctus permanens in saeculum saeculi.*[69] If we could contemplate the Humanity of Jesus, we should see it prostrate in reverence before the Word to Whom His Humanity is united. This is the reverence that the Spirit places within our souls; He keeps it there but in mingling it, by the gift of piety, with that love and filial tenderness which results from our Divine adoption and makes us cry out to God: "Father!" This gift of piety implants in us, as in Jesus, the tendency to refer everything to our Father.

Such are the gifts of the Divine Spirit. They perfect the virtues by disposing us to act with a supernatural assurance which constitutes in us, as I have said, what is like a Divine instinct of heavenly things; by these gifts which the Holy Spirit Himself places within us to render us docile to His action, He achieves the work of making us more and more the children of God: *Quicumque enim Spiritu Dei aguntur, ii sunt filii Dei.*[70]

[67] Rom. viii, 26. [68] Preface of the Mass. [69] Ps. xviii, 10. [70] Rom. viii, 14

When therefore we let ourselves be guided by the promptings of this Spirit of love; when we are, in the measure of our weakness, constantly faithful to His holy inspirations—those inspirations that lead us towards God and what is pleasing to Him—the result is that we act in the *full* meaning of our Divine adoption; then our souls produce those fruits which are at once the term of the Holy Spirit's action in us and, by their sweetness, are like the anticipated reward of our fidelity to this action. These fruits, as enumerated by St. Paul, are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continence and chastity.[71] These fruits, all worthy of the Spirit of Love and Holiness, are also worthy of our Heavenly Father Who finds His glory in them: *In hoc clarificatus est Pater meus ut fructum plurimum afferatis;*[72] finally, they are worthy of Christ Jesus Who merited them for us and to Whom the Holy Spirit unites us: *Qui manet in me et ego in eo hic fert fructum multum.*[73]

The Holy Spirit Whom Christ, as the Word, sends us, is within us the principle, the source of those rivers of living water, of the grace which springs up within us into life everlasting,[74] that is to say that makes us bear fruits of everlasting life. . . . Whilst awaiting the supreme beatitude, these waters "make joyful the city" of souls: *Fluminis impetus laetificat civitatem Dei.*[75] St. Paul says too that all faithful souls, those who believe in Christ, have "in one Spirit . . . all been made to drink".[76] That is why the liturgy, the echo of the teaching of Jesus and of the Apostles, causes us to invoke the Holy Spirit Who is also the Spirit of Jesus as the "Living Spring", *Fons vivus.*[77]

VI

Such then is the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in our souls. Like the Divine principle whence it emanates, this action is holy and tends to make us holy. What now shall be our devotion towards this Spirit Who dwells in us from our baptism and Whose virtue within us is, of its nature, so deep and efficacious?

First of all we must often *invoke* Him. Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is God; He too desires our holiness. Moreover, it enters into the Divine plan that we should pray to the Holy Spirit as we pray to the Father and the Son to Whom He is equal in power and goodness.

[71] Gal. v, 22-23. [72] Joan. xv, 8. [73] Ibid. 5.
[74] *Hujusmodi autem flumina sunt aquae vivae quia sunt continuatae suo principio, scilicet Spiritui Sancto inhabitanti.* St. Thom. *In Joan.* vii, lect. 5.
[75] Ps. xlv, 5. [76] I Cor. xii, 13. [77] Hymn *Veni Creator.*

The Church is our guide in this. She closes the cycle of solemnities celebrating Christ's mysteries with Pentecost, the Feast of the mission of the Holy Spirit; during this time she has wonderful prayers, wherewith to ask grace from the Divine Spirit, aspirations full of love, such as the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. O Infinite Love, proceeding from the Father and the Son, give me the spirit of adoption; teach me to act always as a true child of God. Abide in me, grant that I may abide in Thee so that I may love as Thou lovest. I am nothing without Thee: *Sine tuo numine nihil est in homine* . . . I am good for nothing, but keep me united to Thee, fill me with Thy love so that I may remain united through Thee to the Father and the Son! Let us often ask for a greater share in the Holy Spirit's gifts, the *Sacrum septenarium*. We ought to *thank* Him too and return humble thanks. If Christ Jesus has merited all for us, it is by His Spirit[78] that He guides and directs us; it is through the magnificent liberality of His Spirit that we hold those abundant graces which make us, little by little, like to Jesus. How can we fail to testify often our gratitude to this Guest Whose loving and efficacious presence fills us with such precious benefits? The first homage we must offer to this Spirit, Who with the Father and the Son is God, is to believe with a practical faith in His Divinity, His power and His goodness.

Next let us take care *not to oppose His action* within us. *Spiritum nolite extinguere,* says St. Paul,[79] "Extinguish not the Spirit"; and again: *Nolite contristare Spiritum,* "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God".[80] As I have said, the action of the Spirit in the soul is delicate because it is an action of completeness, of perfection; His touches are of infinite delicacy. We must be watchful not to oppose the workings of this Divine Spirit by our levity, our voluntary dissipation, our carelessness, or wilful deliberate resistances, by an ill-regulated attachment to our own judgment: *Nolite esse prudentes apud vosemetipos.*[81] In the things of God, do not trust to human wisdom, for then the Holy Spirit will relinquish you to this natural prudence which, as you know, St. Paul says is "foolishness" in God's sight, *Stultitia apud Deum.*[82] This action of the Holy Spirit is quite incompatible with those imperfections which so often overtake us by surprise and which we regret, compatible too with our infirmities, human limitations and temptations; our native poverty does not repel the Holy Spirit: He is

[78] When we say Christ guides us *by* His Spirit, we do not say the Holy Spirit is an instrument; He is God, the cause of grace; but we mean by this that the Holy Spirit is the principle (for us) of grace, Himself proceeding from a principle, from the Father and the Son; Jesus Christ, as Word, sends us the Holy Spirit. St. Thom. I, q. xlv, a. 6, ad. 2.

[79] Thessal. v, 19. [80] Ephes. iv, 30. [81] Rom. xii, 16. [82] I Cor. iii, 19.

the *Pater pauperum*, the "Father of the poor", as the Church calls Him.[83]

That which is incompatible with His action is calculated resistance to His inspirations. Why is this? First because the Spirit proceeds from love, He is love Itself; and yet although His love for us is incommensurable, and His action infinitely powerful, the Holy Spirit absolutely respects our liberty and does not compel our will. We have the sad privilege of being able to resist Him; but nothing thwarts love like obstinate resistance to its advances. Then, it is above all by His gifts that the Holy Spirit guides us in the path of holiness and makes us live as children of God; now, in His gifts, it is the Holy Spirit Who urges and determines the soul to act: *In donis Spiritus Sancti mens humana non se habet ut movens, sed magis ut mota;*[84] the soul's part is certainly not to remain entirely passive, but to be ready to receive Divine inspiration, to listen to it, and be promptly faithful to it. Nothing blunts the action of the Holy Spirit in us like a rigid, unbending attitude in regard to those inward movements which bear us Godwards, and urge us to the observance of His commandments, to the accomplishment of His good pleasure, to charity, humility and confidence. To reply "no" voluntarily, deliberately, even in little things, impedes the Holy Spirit's action within us; it becomes less strong and more rare, and the soul remains at an ordinary degree, a mediocre level of holiness; its supernatural life lacks intensity: *Spiritum nolite contristare.*

And if these infidelities are multiplied, and become frequent and habitual, the Holy Spirit is silent; the soul thus given over to itself, without guide and inward support in the path of salvation and perfection, is very near to becoming the prey of the prince of darkness; it is the death of charity: *Spiritum nolite extinguere.* Extinguish not the Holy Spirit, for He is like a fire of love burning within our souls.[85]

Rather let us remain, in the measure of our weakness, but with generosity, faithful to the "Spirit of Truth" Who is also the Spirit of Holiness; let us be souls promptly docile to the touches of this Spirit. What deep joy and what inward liberty a soul tastes that thus gives itself up to the action of the Holy Spirit! This Divine Spirit will cause us to bear fruits of holiness, pleasing to God. As the Divine Artist—*Digitus paternae dexterae*—He will, with infinitely delicate touches, complete in us the work of Jesus, or rather, He will form Jesus within us, as He

[83] Sequence *Veni, Sancte Spiritus.*
[84] St. Thom. II-II, q. lii, a. 2, ad. 1.
[85] *Ignis,* Hymn *Veni Creator. Et tui amoris ignem accende.* Mass for Whit-Sunday.

formed the Holy Humanity of Jesus, so that by His workings, we may reproduce in ourselves, to the glory of the Father, the traits of that Divine sonship that we have in Christ Jesus: *Christus per Spiritum Sanctum est in sanctitate conceptus, ut esset Filius Dei naturalis; alii per Spiritum Sanctum sanctificantur, ut sint Filii Dei adoptivi.*[86]

[86] St. Thom. III, q. xxxii, a. 1.

NOTE

The Holy Spirit is truly the soul of the Church . . . p. 114. When we say that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, we evidently do not intend to say that He is the form of the Church, as the soul is, in us, the form of the body. Taking things from this point of view, it would be more theologically correct to say that the soul of the Church is sanctifying grace (with the infused virtues that are necessarily attendant upon it); grace is, in fact, the principle of supernatural life which makes the members belonging to the body of the Church live with divine life. However, even then, the analogy between grace and the soul is only imperfect; but this is not the moment to dwell on these distinctions. When we say that the Holy Spirit, and not grace, is the soul of the Church, we indicate the cause instead of the effect, for it is the Holy Spirit Who produces sanctifying grace. We wish then by this expression (Holy Spirit = soul of the Church), to mark the inward influence, vivifying and "unifying", if one may thus express it, that the Holy Spirit exercises in the Church. This manner of speaking is perfectly legitimate; it is employed by several of the Fathers of the Church, for example, St. Augustine: *Quod est in corpore nostro anima, id est Spiritus Sanctus in corpere Christi quod est Ecclesia* (*Sermo* CLXXXVII *de tempore*). Many modern theologians speak after the same manner, and Leo XIII has consecrated this expression in his Encyclical upon the Holy Ghost. It is interesting to remark that St. Thomas, in order to denote the internal influence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, compares it to that which the heart exercises in the human organism.

II

Foundation and Double Aspect of the Christian Life

I. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

SUMMARY. Faith, the *first attitude* of the soul and the *foundation* of the supernatural life. I. Christ requires faith as the *preliminary condition* of union with him. II. Nature of faith: Assent to the *testimony of God proclaiming that Jesus is His Son.* III. Faith in the Divinity of Christ is the *foundation of our inner life;* Christianity is the *acceptation of the Divinity of Christ* in the Incarnation. IV. *Exercise* of the virtue of faith: *fruitfulness* of the inner life based upon faith. V. Why we must have an *intense faith in the infinite value of Christ's merits.* How faith is the source of joy.

IN the preceding conferences, I have tried to show you the economy of the divine designs considered in itself.

We have seen the eternal plan of our adoptive predestination in Jesus Christ—the realization of this plan by the Incarnation, Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, being at once our Model, our Satisfaction, our Life—lastly the mission of the Church continuing here below, under the action of the Holy Ghost, the sanctifying work of the Saviour.

The Divine figure of Christ dominates all this plan: the Eternal thoughts are centred on Him: He is the *Alpha*, He is the *Omega.* In the days before His coming, figures, rites and prophecies converge towards Him; after His coming, all is linked with Him. He is truly *the centre of the Divine plan.*

He is also, as we have seen, *the centre of the supernatural life.* The supernatural is to be found first of all in Him: the Man-God, perfect humanity indissolubly united to a Divine Person, possessing fulness of grace and heavenly treasures, and meriting, by His passion and death, to be the universal distributor of them.

He is the Way, the only way by which to come to the Eternal Father: NEMO *venit ad Patrem* NISI *per me;*[1] except this foundation pre-established by God, nothing is stable: *Fundamentum enim aliud* NEMO *potest ponere, praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Jesus.*[2] Without this Redeemer and without faith in His merits, there is no salvation, still less holiness: NON *est* IN ALIO *aliquo salus. Nec enim aliud nomen est sub caelo datum hominibus, in quo oporteat nos salvos fiera.*[3] Christ

[1] Joan. xiv, 15. [2] I Cor. iii, 11. [3] Act. iv, 12.

Jesus is the only Way, the only Truth, the only Life. Who follows not this way goes astray from truth and seeks in vain for life. *Qui habet Filium, habet vitam; qui non habet Filium, vitam non habet.*[4]

To live supernaturally is, for us all, to share in the plenitude of Divine life that is in Jesus Christ: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant . . .Et de plenitudine ejus nos omnes accepimus.* We receive our state of adoption from Him. We are only children of God in the measure we are conformed to Him Who, alone, is by right the only true Son of the Father, but Who wills to have with Himself a multitude of brethren through sanctifying grace. All the supernatural work considered from God's point of view is summed up in this.

It was in order we might receive this grace of adoption that Christ came and gave Himself to us: *Ut adoptionem filiorum reciperemus;*[5] and that He has confided all His treasures and all powers to the Church. He sends and continues to send "the Spirit of Truth", the sanctifying Spirit, to direct her and perfect, by His action in souls, the work of sanctification, until this mystical body comes, at the end of time, to its last perfection. Beatitude itself, the crowning of our supernatural adoption, is nothing less than the inheritance Christ shares with us: *Heredes Dei, coheredes Christi.*[6]

So Christ is and remains the one object of divine complacency. It is only in Him and for His sake that the elect, who form His kingdom, are enveloped in the same eternal look of love: *Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in saecula.*[7]

That is what we have seen so far. But it will serve for little if it is only in an abstract and theoretical manner we contemplate this Divine plan, whence shines forth the wisdom and goodness of our God. We must *adapt ourselves practically to this plan*, under penalty of not belonging to Christ's kingdom. This is what we shall see in the following conferences. I will try to show you how grace takes possession of our souls in baptism; how the work of God is elaborated in us; and what are the conditions of our personal action as free creatures whereby we may be enabled to participate in the divine life in the largest manner possible.

We shall see that the foundation of all this spiritual edifice is faith in the Divinity of Our Lord, and that baptism, the first of all the sacraments, marks our whole existence with a double character of "death to sin", and of "life for God".

In the wonderful discourse which Our Lord pronounced at the Last Supper, on the eve of His death, when He raised as it were a

[4] I Joan. v, 12. [5] Gal. iv, 5. [6] Rom. viii, 17. [7] Hebr. xiii, 8.

corner of the veil which hides from us the secrets of the divine life, He said it is to the glory of the Father that we bear much fruit: *In hoc clarificatus est Pater meus, ut fructum plurimum afferatis.*[8] It is therefore to enter into the eternal designs if we seek to develop in us, in the highest degree, our condition of children of God.

Let us ask Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father and our Model, to teach us practically not only how He abides in us, but also how we ought to abide in Him, for that is the one means for us of bearing much fruit by which the Father will recognize us as His beloved children: *Qui manet in Me, et ego in eo, hic fert fructum multum.*[9]

All holiness, as I have said—and my greatest desire is that this truth should be engraved in the depths of your souls—all holiness for us consists of participating in the holiness of Christ Jesus, the Son of God.

But how are we to participate in it?—By receiving Jesus Christ Who is the one source of holiness. When speaking of the Incarnation, St. John tells us that all those who receive Christ are "made the sons of God": *Quotquot autem receperunt eum dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri.* And how do we receive Christ, the Incarnate Word? First and before all, by faith: *His qui credunt in nomine ejus.*[10]

St. John then says that it is faith in Jesus Christ that makes us children of God. That is likewise the thought of St. Paul: "For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus": *Omnes filii Dei estis per fidem, quae est in Christo Jesu.*[11] Because by faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, we identify ourselves with Him; we accept Him as the Son of God and the Incarnate Word. Faith yields us to Christ; and Christ, introducing us into the supernatural domain, yields us to His Father. And the more perfect, profound, ardent and constant our faith is in Christ's Divinity, the more right we have, as children of God, to the communication of Divine life. In receiving Christ by faith, we become by grace what He is by nature—children of God; and then our state calls forth an influx of divine life from the Heavenly Father. Our state of "children of God" is like a continual prayer: O Holy Father, give us this day our daily bread, that is to say, the divine life of which Thy Son has the plenitude!

I wish to speak to you of this faith. Faith is the very first attitude we ought to have in our relations with God: *Prima conjunctio ad Deum est per fidem.*[12] St. Augustine says the same: "It is primarily

[8] Joan. xv, 8. [9] Ibid. 5. [10] Ibid. i, 12. [11] Gal. iii, 26; cf. Rom. iii, 22-26.
[12] St. Thom. IV, Sent. dist. 39, a. 6, ad. 2. *Est aliquid primum in virtutibus directe per quod scilicet jam ad Deum acceditur. Primus autem accessus ad Deum est per fidem.* II-II, q. clxi, a. 5, ad. 2. Cf. II-II, q. iv, a. 7 et. q. xxiii, a. 8.

faith that subjects the soul to God": *Fides est prima quae subjungat animam Deo.*[13] St. Paul says: "Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God, must believe": *Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.*[14] With still greater reason, it is impossible without faith to attain to His friendship and remain His child: *impossibile est ad filiorum ejus consortium pervenire.*[15]

You see at once that this subject is not only important, but vital. We shall understand nothing of the supernatural life, of the divine life in our souls, if we do not grasp that it is altogether founded upon this faith, *In fide* FUNDATI,[16] upon this intimate and profound conviction of the divinity of Jesus Christ. For as the Holy Council of Trent says: "Faith is the root and foundation of all justification", and in consequence, of all holiness: *Fides est humanae salutis initium, fundamentum et radix omnis justificationis.*[17]

We will now see what is this faith, what is its object, and how it is manifested.

I

Let us consider what happened when Our Lord lived in Judea. When we read the account of His life in the Gospels, we see it is first of all faith that He requires from those who come to Him.

We read that one day two blind men were following Him, crying out: "Have mercy on us, O Son of David." Jesus lets them approach Him, and says to them: "Do you believe that I can do this unto you?" And they reply: "Yea, Lord." Then He touches their eyes and gives them back their sight, saying: "According to your faith, be it done unto you."[18] Again, after the Transfiguration, He finds, at the foot of Mount Thabor, a father who asks the cure of his son possessed by a devil. And what does Jesus say to him? "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Immediately the father of the boy cries out: "I do believe, Lord, help my unbelief." And Jesus delivers the child.[19] When the chief of the synagogue asks Him to save his daughter, Our Lord still gives the same reply: "Believe only, and she shall be safe."[20]

These words often fall from His lips. Very often too we hear Him say: "Go, thy faith hath saved thee: thy faith hath made thee whole." He says this to the paralytic man. He says it to the woman who had suffered from an infirmity that had lasted twelve years and was cured by touching the hem of His garment with faith.[21]

[13] *De agone Christiano*, 14. [14] Hebr. xi, 6. [15] Concil. Trid. Sess. VI, cap. 8.
[16] Col. i, 23. [17] Sess. VI, cap. 8. [18] Matth. ix, 27-30.
[19] Ibid. xvii, 14-19; Marc. ix, 16-26; Luc. ix, 38-43.
[20] Luc. viii, 50. [21] Marc. v, 25-34.

He makes faith in Him the indispensable condition of His miracles. He requires this faith even from those He loves the most. When Martha, the sister of His friend Lazarus, whom He comes to raise from the dead, says to Him that if He had been there her brother would not have died, Our Lord tells her that Lazarus shall rise again. But He wills before working this miracle that Martha should make an act of faith in His Person: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: believest thou this?"[22]

Where He does not meet with faith, He deliberately limits the effects of His power. The Gospel expressly says that at Nazareth "He wrought not many miracles, because of their unbelief": *Et non fecit ibi virtutes multas propter incredulitatem eorum.*[23] If I may so express it, Christ's action appears to be paralysed by lack of faith.

But wherever He finds it, He can refuse it nothing. He takes pleasure in praising it openly. One day when Jesus was at Capharnaum, a pagan officer who commanded a company of a hundred men came up to Him and asked the cure of one of his servants who was sick. Jesus says to him: "I will come and heal him." But the centurion at once replies: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man . . . having under me soldiers, and I say to this one, Go and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." In the same way, it is sufficient for Thee to speak one word, to command the sickness, and it will depart.

What faith in this pagan! Christ Jesus, even before pronouncing the liberating word, manifests the joy this faith causes Him: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you that many Gentiles shall come and shall sit down at the feast of eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, while the children of Israel, who were the first to be called to this banquet, shall be cast out on account of their unbelief." And turning to the centurion, He says to him: "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee."[24]

Faith is so pleasing to Jesus that it even obtains from Him what appeared not to be His first intention to grant. We have a striking example of this in the cure besought by the woman of Canaan. Our Lord had reached the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, a pagan region. A woman of these parts, being come where He was, cries in a loud voice: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou, Son of David: my daughter is

[22] Joan. xi, 27; cf. x, 40 a. 42. [23] Matth. xiii, 58.
[24] Matth. viii, 1-13; Luc. vii, 1-10.

grievously troubled with a devil." But Jesus answers her not a word. Then His disciples come and say to Him: "Send her away, for she crieth after us." And Christ answers that His mission is only to preach to the Jews. He had reserved to His disciples the work of evangelizing the pagans. But the woman, prostrating herself before Him, says: "Lord, help me", and Jesus answers her as He had answered the apostles, but in employing a proverbial saying, then in use for distinguishing the Jews from the pagans: "It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs." And the woman, animated by her faith, exclaims: "Yea, Lord: for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." Jesus is so touched by this faith that He cannot refrain from extolling it, and immediately granting her what she asks: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt." And from that same hour, her daughter was cured.[25]

Doubtless, nearly all these examples have to do with bodily cures; but it is also on account of faith that Our Lord forgives sins and grants eternal life. What does He say to Magdalen, when she comes and throws herself at His feet and washes them with her tears? "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The remission of sins is assuredly a grace of a purely spiritual order. And for what reason does Christ restore the life of grace to Magdalen? On account of her faith. Christ Jesus says exactly the same words to her as to those He cured of their bodily ills: "Thy faith hath made thee safe: go in peace."[26] See again at Calvary. What a magnificent recompense He gives to the good thief on account of his faith! This man was probably a brigand; but upon the cross when all the enemies of Jesus hurled sarcasms and mockeries at Him, saying: "If He be the Son of God, as He says, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him"—this thief confesses the divinity of the Christ abandoned by His disciples and dying on a gibbet. He speaks to Jesus of "His Kingdom" at the moment when Jesus is about to die: he asks for a place in this Kingdom. What faith in the power of the dying Christ! And how moved Jesus is by this faith! "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." He forgives him all his sins because of this faith, and assures to him a place in the eternal Kingdom.

So then faith is the first virtue Our Lord claims from those who approach Him and it remains the same for us all.

When, before ascending into Heaven, He sends His Apostles to continue His mission throughout the world, it is faith He requires; and in this faith He sums up, as it were, all the Christian life: "Go, teach all

[25] Matth. xv, 22-28. [26] Luc. vii, 50.

nations . . . he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

Is faith alone then sufficient? No, the sacraments and the observance of the commandments are necessary too, but a man who does not believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ is a stranger to His commandments and sacraments. Besides, it is because we believe in the Divinity of Jesus that we observe His precepts and approach the sacraments. Faith then is the basis of all our supernatural life.

God wills that during the stage of our mortal life we should serve Him by faith. His glory requires it to be so. It is the homage He expects from us and the probation we have to pass through before arriving at the eternal goal. One day we shall see God unveiled; His glory will then consist in communicating Himself fully in all the spendour and brightness of His eternal beatitude. But as long as we are upon earth, it enters into the economy of the Divine Plan that God should be for us a hidden God. Here below, God wills to be known, adored and served by faith—and the greater, the more ardent and practical this faith is, the more we are pleasing to God.

II

But you may say, what is this faith? Speaking in a general way, faith is the adherence of our intelligence to the word of another. When an upright, loyal man tells us something, we admit it, we have *faith* in his word; to give one's word is to give one's self.

Supernatural faith is the adherence of our intelligence, not to the word of a man, but to the word of God. God can neither deceive nor be deceived. Faith is the homage rendered to God as the supreme truth and authority. In order that this homage may be worthy of God, we must submit ourselves to the authority of His word, whatever be the difficulties our mind encounters. This Divine word affirms the existence of mysteries beyond our reason; faith can be required from us in things where our senses, our experience seem to tell us the very contrary of what God tells us; but God requires our conviction in the authority of His revelation to be so absolute that if all creation affirmed the contrary we should say to God in spite of everything: "My God, I believe because Thou sayest it."[27]

[27] This is not the place to examine the psychological and theological question relative to the nature of the act of faith: the character of our conferences does not lend itself to this. We refer the reader desirous of going deeply into these questions to the lucid explanation of Rev. Fr. Bainvel, S. J. in his work *La foi et l'acte de foi*. His exposition of the teaching of Cardinal Billot on the faitth of authority is particularly striking. See also the remarkable study of R. P. Gardeil O. P. upon *La Crédibilité*.

To believe, says St. Thomas, is to give, under the empire of the will, moved by grace, the assent and adherence of our intelligence to the Divine truth: *Ipsum autem credere est actus intellectus assentientis veritati divinae ex imperio voluntatis sub motu gratiae.*[28] It is the mind that believes, but the heart is not absent from believing; and so that we may make this act of faith, God places in us at baptism, a power, a force, a "habitude": namely the virtue of faith, whereby our intelligence is inclined to admit the testimony of God out of love for His truth. That is the very essence of faith, but this adhesion and this love naturally include an infinite number of degrees. When the love that leads us to believe yields us up entirely to the full acceptation, in both our mind and conduct, of the testimony of God, then our faith is perfect: it operates and manifests itself by charity.[29]

Now what is the testimony of God that we have to accept by faith? It is summed up in this: *That Christ Jesus is God's own Son, sent for our salvation and given for our sanctification.*

You know that the voice of the Father has only been heard three times by the world,[30] and each time it was to tell us that Christ is His Son, worthy of all love and all glory: *Hic est filius meus dilectus . . . ipsum audite:* "Hear ye Him." That was, according to Our Lord's own words, God's testimony to the world when He gave it His Son: *Qui misit me Pater, ipse testimonium perhibuit de me.*[31] And to confirm this testimony, God gave His Son the power of working miracles; He raised Him from the dead. Our Lord Himself tells us that life everlasting depends for us upon the full acceptation of this testimony: *Haec est autem voluntas Patris mei qui misit me, ut omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum, habeat vitam aeternam.*[32] Christ Jesus often lays stress on this point: "Amen, I say unto you, that he who believeth Him that sent Me, hath life everlasting . . . (he) is passed from death to life."[33]

We cannot too often meditate on these words of St. John: "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son." And why did He give Him? "That whosoever," he says, "believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." And he adds in explanation: "For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him. He that believeth in Him is not judged. But he that doth not believe, is already judged: because he

[28] St. Thom. II-II, q. ii, a. 9.

[29] *Fides nisi ad eam spes accedat et caritas neque unit perfecte cum Christo, neque corporis ejus vivum membrum efficit. Concil. Trid. Sess. VI, cap.* 7.

[30] Matth. iii, 17; xvii, 5; Joan. xii, 25.

[31] Matth. v, 37. See all the passage from v, 31.

[32] Joan. vi, 40; cf. xvii, 21. [33] Ibid. v, 24.

believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God."[34] "To judge" here means to condemn. Now St. John says that he who does not believe in Christ is already condemned. Note this term: "is already condemned". What does it mean? That it is vain for one who has not faith in Jesus Christ to try to save himself: his cause is even now judged. The Eternal Father makes faith in His Son, Whom He has sent, the first necessary attitude of our soul and the source of our salvation. *Qui credit in Filium habet vitam aeternam: qui autem incredulus est Filio, non videbit vitam, sed ira Dei manet super eum.*[35] God attaches so much value to our belief in His Son that His wrath abides—again remark the present tense: it "abideth" now—on him who does not believe in his Son. What does all this signify? That faith in the Divinity of Jesus is, according to the designs of the Father, the first thing needful in order to share in the Divine Life; faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ bears with it all other revealed truths.

All revelation, it may be said, is contained in this supreme testimony God gives us that Jesus Christ is His Son, and all faith is likewise contained in the acceptation of this testimony. If we believe in Christ's Divinity, we believe at the same time in the whole revelation of the Old Testament which has its fulfilment in Christ; we believe the whole revelation of the New Testament, for all that the apostles and the Church teach us is only the development of the revelation of Christ.

Whoever then accepts the Divinity of Christ embraces the whole of revelation. Jesus is the Incarnate Word; the Word says all that God is, all that He knows; this Word is incarnate and reveals God to men: *Unigenitus qui est in sinu Patris ipse enarravit.*[36] And when by faith we receive Christ, we receive all revelation.

Therefore, the intimate conviction that Our Lord is truly God constitutes the first foundation of our supernatural life. If we understand this truth and put it into practice, our inner life will be full of light and fruitfulness.

III

This truth is so important that I want to dwell on it some moments.

During the mortal life of Jesus, His Divinity was hidden under the veil of His Humanity; even for those who lived with Him, His Divinity was an object of faith.

Doubtless, the Jews were aware of the sublimity of His doctrine. "Never did man speak like this man",[37] they repeated. They were the witnesses of works which, as they acknowledged, God alone could

[34] Ibid. iii, 16-18. [35] Ibid. iii, 36. [36] Joan. i, 18. [37] Ibid. vii, 46.

do.[38] But they saw too that Christ was man; it is said that even His near acquaintances who had only known Him in the workshop of Nazareth did not believe in Him in spite of His miracles.[39]

His Apostles, although they were His familiar hearers, did not see His Divinity. In the episode which I have already related when Our Lord asks them who He is, St. Peter says to Him: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Our Lord at once replies it is not because St. Peter had any natural evidence that he thus spoke, but only because the eternal Father had given him this revelation. And on account of this revelation He proclaims His Apostle blessed: *Beatus es, Simon Bar Jona, quia caro et sanguis non revelavit tibi, sed Pater meus qui in caelis est.*

More than once we read in the Gospel that the Jews disputed amongst themselves concerning Christ. Thus after Christ had explained the parable of the Good Shepherd Who freely gives His life for His sheep, there arose a discussion among those who heard Him. Some said: "He hath a devil and is mad, why hear you Him?" But others replied: "These are not the words of one that hath a devil." And alluding to the miracle of the man born blind whom Jesus had cured a few days previously, these added: "Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" Then wishing to ascertain the truth, the Jews surround Jesus, and say to Him: "How long dost Thou hold our souls in suspense? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." And what does Our Lord reply? "I speak to you, and you believe not; the works that I do in the name of My Father, they give testimony of Me"; and He adds: "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep: My sheep hear my voice; and I know them and they follow me; and I give them life everlasting; and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand. That which My Father hath given Me is greater than all; and no one can snatch them out of the hand of My Father. I and the Father are one." Then the Jews taking Him for a blasphemer, because He called Himself the equal of God, take up stones to stone Him, and on Jesus asking them why they do so, they reply: "We stone Thee for Thy blasphemy; because that Thou being a man, makest Thyself God." And what does Jesus answer? Does He deny what they reproach Him with? No, on the contrary; He rather confirms it; He is truly what they say—the equal of God. They have understood Him aright, but He affirms His words anew: He is the Son of God since, He says, He does the works of His Father Who sent Him and because by the Divine nature, "the Father is in Me, and I in the Father".[40]

[38] Ibid. iii, 2. [39] Ibid. vii, 5. [40] Joan. x, 37-38.

Therefore, you see, faith in the Divinity of Christ Jesus constitutes the first step towards the Divine Life for us as well as for the Jews of His time. To believe that Jesus is the Son of God, God Himself, is the first condition that is necessary in order to be numbered among His sheep and be pleasing to His Father. For that is indeed what the Father requires of us: *Hoc est opus Dei ut credatis in eum quem misit ille.*[41] Christianity is nothing else than the *acceptation in all its far-reaching, doctrinal and practical consequences of the Divinity of Christ in the Incarnation.* The reign of Christ—holiness, through Him—is established in us in the measure of the purity, intensity and fulness of our faith in Jesus Christ. Holiness for us is the full development of our condition of children of God. Now it is by faith that we are first of all born to that life of grace that makes us children of God: *Omnis qui credit quoniam Jesus est Christus* EX DEO NATUS EST.[42] We are not truly God's children unless our life is based on this faith. The Father gives us His Son to be everything for us—our Model, our Satisfaction, our Life. He says to us: Receive My Son, for in Him you have all things: *Quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?*[43] And in receiving Him, you receive Me, you become, through Him, in Him, My beloved sons. That is what Our Lord said Himself: "He that believeth in Me, doth not believe in Me, but in Him that sent Me."[44]

St. John says: "If we receive the testimony of men" (if we believe reasonably what men affirm to us), "the testimony of God is greater than any human testimony." And once again, what is this testimony of God? It is the testimony God has given that Christ is His Son. "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the testimony of God in himself. He that believeth not the Son, maketh Him a liar: because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of His Son",[45] *Qui credit in Filium Dei habet testimonium Dei in se.* These words contain a very profound truth. For in what does this testimony consist? "That God hath given to us eternal life", says St. John. "And this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath life. He that hath not the Son, hath not life."[46] What do these words signify?

To understand them we must, in the light of Revelation, mount to the very source of life in God. All the life of the Father in the Holy Trinity is to "utter" His Son, His Word, to beget, by one simple, eternal act, a Son like to Himself, to Whom He communicates the fulness of His being and of His perfections. In this one and eternal Word, infinite like Himself, the Father unceasingly recognizes His Son, His own image, "the splendour of His glory". And every word,

[41] Joan. vi, 29. [42] I Joan. v, 1. [43] Rom. viii, 32.
[44] Joan. xii, 44. [45] I Joan. v, q. 10. [46] Ibid. v, 11-12.

every outward testimony that God gives us of Christ's Divinity, such as that given at the baptism of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son", is only the echo, in the world of the senses, of this testimony the Father renders to Himself in the sanctuary of the Divinity, and that He expresses by a Word in which He places all Himself and which is His intimate life: *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te.*

When therefore we accept this testimony of the Eternal Father, when we say to God: "This little Child lying in the crib is Thy Son, I adore and give myself to Him; this Youth toiling in the workshop of Nazareth, is Thy Son, I adore Him; this Man crucified on Calvary, is Thy Son, I adore Him; these fragments of bread are the appearances under which Thy Son is hidden, I there adore Him"; when we say to Jesus Himself: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God", and prostrate ourselves before Him, yielding to Him all our energies to serve Him; when all our actions are in accordance with this faith and spring from the charity that makes faith perfect—then our whole life becomes the echo of the life of the Father Who eternally expresses His Son in one infinite word; and this divine action, never ceasing, embracing all time, being an eternal "now", we shall thus associate ourselves in the very life of God. That is what St. John says: "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, hath the testimony of God in himself", that testimony by which the Father "utters" His Son.

IV

We cannot repeat these acts of faith in Christ's Divinity too often. We received this faith in baptism, but we must not leave it buried or sleeping in the depth of our heart; we must ask God to increase it in us: *Domine, adauge nobis fidem;* we must exercise it by the repetition of our acts. And the purer and more intense it becomes, the more it will envelop our existence and the more solid, true, luminous, sure and fruitful our spiritual life will be. *For the profound conviction that Christ is God and that He has been given to us, contains all spiritual life:* holiness flows for us from this intimate conviction as from its source. This intense faith penetrates through the veil of the humanity that hides the Divinity of Christ from our sight. Whether He be shown to us in a crib, under the form of a little Child, or in a workshop; as a Prophet ever the object of contradiction for His enemies; under the species of bread and wine—faith tells us, with ever the same certainty, that it is always the same Christ, true God as well as true Man, equal to His Father and the Holy Ghost in majesty, in power, in

wisdom and in love. And when this conviction is deep it throws us into an act of intense adoration and of abandonment to the will of Him Who while being man, remains what He is—the Almighty and infinite perfection.

Let us place ourselves at the feet of Christ and say to Him: Lord Jesus, Incarnate Word, I believe that Thou art God; true God begotten of true God: *Deum verum de Deo vero*; I do not see Thy Divinity but because Thy Father tells me: "This is My beloved Son", I believe it; and because I believe it, I submit myself to Thee entirely, body, soul, judgment, will, heart, sensibility, imagination, all my energies; I wish that the words of the psalmist may be fulfilled in me, namely that all things may be subjected under Thy feet in homage, *Omnia subjecisti sub pedibus ejus.*[47] I wish to follow Thee as my Chief and that Thy Gospel may be my light and Thy Will my guide; I wish neither to think otherwise than as Thou thinkest because Thou art the infallible Truth, nor to act without Thee, because Thou art the only Way to go to the Father, nor to seek my joy outside Thy Will, because Thou art the very fountain of life. Possess me wholly, through Thy Spirit, for the glory of the Father!

By this act of faith, we lay the very foundation of our spiritual life: *Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere, praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Jesus.*[48]

And if this act is frequently renewed, then Christ, as St. Paul says, "dwells in our hearts": *Christum habitare per fidem in cordibus nostris,*[49] that is to say He reigns in our souls in a constant manner as Master and King, and becomes in us, through His Spirit, the principle of divine life.

Let us then often renew this act of faith in the Divinity of Jesus, because each time we do so, we assure and consolidate the foundation of our spiritual life, rendering it ever less liable to be shaken. When you enter a church and see the little lamp burning before the tabernacle announcing the presence of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, do not let your genuflection be a mere ceremony performed out of routine, but a homage of intimate faith and profound adoration before Our Lord as if you saw Him in all the splendour of His eternal glory; when you sing or recite in the *Gloria* of the Mass all the praises and supplications it contains to Jesus Christ: "Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father . . . Thou Who sittest at the right hand of the Father . . . Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only, O Jesus Christ

[47] Ps. viii, 8. See in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ii, 8, the application of these words to Christ.

[48] I Cor. iii, 11; cf. Col. ii, 6. [49] Ephes. ii, 17.

with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father", let all these praises come from your heart more than from your lips; when you read the Gospel, do so with this conviction that it is the Word of God, the infallible Light and Truth speaking to you and revealing to you the secrets of the Divinity; when you sing in the *Credo* the eternal generation of the Word, come to be united to all humanity: *Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero*, do not only be concerned with the meaning of the words or the beauty of the chant, but consider them as an echo of the voice of the Father contemplating His Son and declaring that He is equal to Himself: *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te*; when you sing: *Et incarnatus est,* "Who was incarnate", let all your being inwardly bow down in an act of self-abasement before the God-made Man, in Whom the Father is well pleased; when you receive Jesus in the Eucharist, receive Him with deep reverence as if you saw Him face to face.

Such acts are extremely pleasing to the Eternal Father, because all His exigencies—and they are infinite—are summed up in willing the glory of His Son.

And the more this Son veils His Divinity, the more He abases Himself out of love for us, the more profoundly too we ought to adore Him as Son of God, the more we ought to exalt Him and render Him our homage. God's supreme desire is to see His Son glorified: *Clarificavi et adhuc clarificabo*:[50] that is one of the three words of the Father the world has heard. He wills to glorify Christ Jesus, because Christ, His Son, is equal to Himself; but He wills it also, says St. Paul, because His Son humbled Himself: *Semetipsum exinanivit . . . propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum*,[51] because He humbled Himself, the Father "hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father". That is why the more Christ humbles Himself in becoming a little Child, in choosing the hidden life of Nazareth, in bearing such of our infirmities as are compatible with His dignity, in submitting Himself to the death of the gibbet like a malefactor, *Cum sceleratis*,[52] in veiling Himself in the Eucharist; the more His Divinity is attacked and denied by unbelievers—the more too ought we to place Him high in the glory of the Father, and in our hearts to yield ourselves to Him in a spirit of intense reverence and entire submission to His Person, and to labour for the extension of His reign in souls.

Such is true faith, the faith that being made perfect in love, sur-

[50] Joan. xii, 28. [51] Philipp. ii, 7-9. [52] Isa. liii, 12.

renders all our being, and practically enveloping all the acts, all the works of our spiritual life, constitutes the very *basis* of our supernatural edifice and of all sanctity. In order to be truly a *foundation*, it is needful that faith should sustain the works we accomplish and become the principle of all our progress in the spiritual life.[53] "As a wise architect", says St. Paul, "I have laid the foundation (in making known to you the Gospel of Christ which you have received by faith). But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."[54]

This spiritual edifice is built of our works. St. Paul says again that the "just man lives by faith": *Justus ex fide*.[55] The "just man" is he who, by the justification received at baptism, is created in justice and possesses in himself the grace of Christ and with it the infused virtues of faith, hope and charity. The just man *lives* by faith. To live, is to have in oneself an inward principle that is the source of movement and operation. It remains true that the inward principle that must animate our acts in order that they may be acts of supernatural life, proportionate to final beatitude, is sanctifying grace; but it is faith that introduces our souls into the region of the supernatural. We only have a share in the divine adoption if we receive Christ, and we only receive Christ by faith: *Quotquot autem receperunt eum, dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri, his qui credunt in nomine ejus.* Faith in Jesus Christ leads to life, and to justification by grace; that is why St. Paul says that the just live by faith.

In the supernatural life, faith in Jesus is a power so much the more active as it is the more deeply anchored in the soul. It first embraces with fervour all the fulness of its object; and as faith refers all to Christ, it regards all things in the divine light of Christ. Faith receives not only the Person of Christ, but embraces all He has said, all He has done and all He has instituted: that is to say, the Church, the Sacraments and all that constitutes the supernatural organism established by Christ in order that our souls may live by His Divine Life. Moreover, the intimate and profound conviction we have of the Divinity of Jesus is the spring of all our activity so that we may generously fulfil all His commands and be rendered unshaken in temptation—*fortes in fide*[56]—and that our hope and love may be sustained in every trial.

What an intensity of supernatural life there is in a soul intimately convinced that Jesus is God! What an abundant source of inner life and of indefatigable apostolate there is in this certainty, becoming

[53] *Justificati . . . in ipsa justitia per Christi gratiam accepta, cooperante* fide *bonis operibus crescunt ac magis sanctificantur.* Concil. Trid. Sess. VI, c. 10.

[54] I Cor. iii, 10.

[55] Rom. i, 17. It is remarkable that St. Paul gives expression to this truth three times in his Epistle. Cf. Gal. ii, 11 and Hebr. x, 38.

[56] Petr. v, 9.

stronger every day, that Christ is All-Holiness, All-Wisdom, All-Power and All-Goodness! . . .

I believe, Lord Jesus, that Thou art the Son of the Living God: I believe it, but increase my faith!

V

There is one point I want to dwell on, which, above all, must be the explicit object of our faith if we wish to live the divine life fully: that is, faith in the infinite value of Christ's merits.

I have already touched on this truth when explaining how Our Lord is the infinite price of our sanctification. But it is important to return to it here when speaking of faith, for it is faith that enables us to draw abundantly from those unfathomable riches which God gives us in His Christ: *Investigabiles divitiae Christi.*

God has made us an immense gift in the Person of His Son Jesus. Christ is a tabernacle wherein are "hidden all the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge" that He has there stored up for us. Christ Himself, by His passion and death, merited to communicate them to us, and He is always living, interceding with His Father for us. But we must know the value of this gift and how to use it: *Si scires donum Dei!* Christ with the plenitude of His sanctity and the infinite value of His merits and credit is this Gift; but this gift is only useful to us according to the measure of our faith. If our faith is great, intense, profound, and reaching to the height of this gift as far as is possible for a creature, there will be no limit to the divine communications made to our souls by the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. If we have not a boundless esteem for Christ's infinite merits, it is because our faith in the Divinity of Jesus is not intense enough; and those who doubt this divine efficacy do not know what is the Humanity of a God.

We ought often to exercise our faith in the satisfactions and merits acquired by Jesus for our sanctification.

When we pray, let us come before the Eternal Father with an *unshaken confidence* in the merits of His Son. Our Lord has paid all our debt; He has gained all for us, and He unceasingly intercedes with His Father for us: *Semper vivens ad interpellandum* PRO NOBIS.[57] Let us then say to God: I know, O my God, that I am altogether wretched; that I only add to my faults every day; I know that before Thy infinite holiness I am, of myself, like mud before the sun; but I cast myself

[57] Hebr. viii, 25.

down before Thee; through grace, I am a member of Thy Son's mystical body; Thy Son has given me this grace, after having redeemed me by His Blood; now that I belong to Him, do not reject me from before Thy divine face!

No, God cannot reject us when we thus rely on the power of His Son; for the Son treats with Him as equal with equal. When we thus acknowledge that of ourselves we are weak and miserable, that we can do nothing, *Sine me nihil potestis facere*, but that we hope for everything from Christ, all that we need in order to live by the Divine Life, *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*, we acknowledge that this Son is everything for us, that He has been established as our Chief and High Priest. That is, says St. John, to render very acceptable homage to the Father "Who loves the Son", Who wills that everything should come to us through the Son because He has given Him all power of life for souls. The soul that has not this *absolute* confidence in Jesus does not fully acknowledge Him for what He is:—the beloved Son of the Father, and hence does not render to the Father that honour which He absolutely requires: *Pater enim diligit Filium, ut omnes honorificent Filium sicut honorificant Patrem. Qui non honorificat Filium, non honorificat Patrem qui misit illum.*[58]

In the same way, when we approach the Sacrament of Penance, let us have great faith in the divine efficacy of the Blood of Jesus. It is this Blood which in this sacrament cleanses our souls from their sins, purifies them, renews their strength, and restores their beauty. The very Blood of Christ is applied to us with His merits at the moment of absolution, that Blood which our Saviour shed for us with incomparable love, those merits which are infinite, but were acquired at the price of measureless sufferings and ignominy. If you knew the gift of God!

Again, when you assist at Holy Mass you are present at the Sacrifice which is the same as that on the Cross; the Man-God offers Himself upon the altar for us as He did on Calvary, although the manner of offering Himself is different; but it is the same Christ, true God as well as true Man, Who immolates Himself upon the altar in order to make us partakers of His inexhaustible merits. If only our faith were ardent and deep! With what reverence we should assist at this Sacrifice, with what unshaken confidence we should receive Jesus in Holy Communion, when He gives Himself with His Humanity and His Divinity, His treasures and His merits, He, the Ransom of the World, and the Son in Whom the Father is well pleased! *Si scires donum Dei!*

When we often make such acts of faith in the power of Christ, in

[58] Joan. v, 20-24.

the value of His merits, our life becomes by the very fact, like a perpetual song of praise to the glory of this supreme High Priest, this universal Mediator, Who gives us every grace; and this is to enter deeply into the eternal ideal, the divine plan; it is to adapt our souls to the sanctifying designs of God at the same time as we associate ourselves with His will by glorifying His beloved Son: *Clarificavi et adhuc clarificabo.*

Let us then go to Our Lord--He alone has the words of eternal life. Let us first of all receive Him with a lively faith wherever He is present: in the Sacraments, in the Church, in His Mystical Body, in our neighbour, in the Providence that directs or permits every event, even suffering; let us receive Him, whatsoever be the form He takes and the moment He comes, with *an entire adherence to His divine word and complete abandonment to His service.* . . . In this is holiness.

We have all read in the Gospel that episode, related by St. John, with so many touching details, of the cure of the man born blind.[59] After having been cured by Jesus on the sabbath day, the man that was blind is questioned, over and over again, by the Pharisees, the enemies of the Saviour. They want to make the man confess that Christ is not a prophet because He does not keep the repose of the sabbath day prescribed by the Law of Moses. But the poor man does not know much. He invariably replies that one called Jesus cured him by sending him to wash at a pool; that is all he knows and, at first, all that he replies. The Pharisees can find nothing against Christ in what he says, and finally they cast the man out of the synagogue because he persists in saying that it has never been heard of before that any man had opened the eyes of one born blind: Jesus must therefore be a prophet sent by God. Our Lord, hearing he had been cast out, and having found him, says to him: "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" The one born blind answers: "Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?" What promptitude of soul! Jesus says to him: "It is He that talketh with thee." And immediately this poor man adheres to the word of Christ. "I believe, Lord", and in the intensity of his faith, he falls down at the feet of Jesus and adores Him: *Credo, Domine, et procidens, adoravit eum;* he embraces the feet of Christ and, in Christ, all the work of Christ.

The man born blind is the image of the soul, healed by Jesus, delivered from eternal darkness and given light through the grace of the Incarnate Word.[60] Whenever Jesus presents Himself to us, we ought to say: *Quis est, Domine, ut credam in eum.* And immediately

[59] Joan. ix, 11, 38. [60] Cf. St. Augustin, *In Joan.* xliv, 1.

we should yield ourselves entirely to Christ, to His service, to the interests of His glory which is likewise the glory of His Father. In acting always thus, we *live* by faith. Christ dwells and reigns in us, His Divinity being in us, by this faith, the principle of all our life.

This faith, which is crowned and manifested by love, is lastly a well-spring of joy for us. Our Lord said: *Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt:* "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."[61] He said this, not for His disciples, but for us. And why then does Our Lord declare "blessed" those who believe in Him? Faith is a source of joy because it makes us share in the knowledge of Christ. He is the Eternal Word and has taught us the Divine secrets: *Unigenitus Filius qui est in sinu Patris ipse enarravit.*[62] In believing what He tells us, we have the same knowledge as He; faith is a source of joy because it is the source of light.

It is a source of joy too because it places us in radical possession of future bliss, it is "the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not": *Sperandarum substantia rerum.*[63] Jesus says Himself: "He that believeth in the Son, hath life overlasting", *Qui credit in Filium Dei habet vitam aeternam.*[64] Note the present tense: *habet*, "he hath"; Christ does not speak in the future tense: "he will have", but He speaks of an already assured possession;[65] just as we have seen that he that believeth not *is* already judged. Faith is a seed, and every seed contains in germ the future harvest. Provided that we put away from faith all that can diminish and tarnish it; that we develop it by prayer and practice, that we constantly give it the occasion of manifesting itself in love, faith places in our hands the substance of the joys to come and gives birth to unshaken confidence: *Qui credit in eum non confundetur.*[66]

Let us remain, as St. Paul says, "grounded in the faith", *In fide fundati*;[67] built up in Christ and confirmed in our faith in Him: *Sicut ergo accepistis Jesum Christum Dominum, in ipso ambulate, radicati et superaedificati in ipso et confirmati fide, sicut et didicistis.*[68] This faith will be put to the test in this century of unbelief, blasphemy, scepticism, materialism and human respect which surrounds us with its unwholesome atmosphere. If you remain confirmed in your faith, says St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles (upon whom Jesus founded

[61] Joan. xx, 29. [62] Ibid. i, 18. [63] Hebr. xi, 1. [64] Joan. iii, 3-6.
[65] *Dicitur aliquis jam finem habere propter spem finis obtinendi.* St. Thom. I-I, q. lxix, a. 2; and the angelic doctor adds: *Unde et apostolus dicit: Spe sa vi facti sumus.* All this article should be read.
[66] Rom. ix, 33. [67] Col. i, 23. [68] Ibid. ii, 6, 7.

His Church when Peter proclaimed that Christ was the Son of God), this faith will "be found unto glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ Whom not having seen you love: in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe: and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified". For, he adds, the end and assured recompense of faith is the salvation and, in consequence, the sanctity of your souls.[69]

[69] I Petr. i, 7-9.

II. BAPTISM, THE SACRAMENT OF ADOPTION AND INITIATION: DEATH AND LIFE

SUMMARY. Baptism, the first of all the Sacraments. I. *Sacrament of the Divine adoption.* II. *Sacrament of Christian initiation;* symbolism and grace of Baptism explained by St. Paul. III. How the *life of Christ contains the double aspect of "death" and of "life"* that Baptism reproduces in us. IV. All *Christian life* is only the practical *development* of the *double initial grace given* at Baptism: *"death to sin"* and *"life unto God"*. The sentiments that remembrance of Baptism ought to give birth to in us: *gratitude, joy* and *confidence.*

THE first attitude of the soul towards the revelation made to us of the Divine plan of our adoption is, as we have seen, faith. Faith is the root of all justification and the principle of the Christian life. It embraces, as to its primordial object, the Divinity of Jesus sent by the Eternal Father to work out our salvation: *Haec est vita aeterna ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum et quem misisti Jesum Christum.*[1]

From this principal object, faith radiates on everything referring to Christ: the Sacraments, the Church, souls, the whole of revelation and, when it culminates in love and adoration yielding all our being to the full accomplishment of the will of Jesus and of His Father, it reaches perfection.

But faith is not enough.

When Our Lord sent forth His Apostles to continue His sanctifying mission upon earth, He said: "he that believeth not shall be condemned". He adds nothing further as for those who will not believe because, faith being the root of all justification, everything done without faith is valueless in God's sight: *Sine fide impossible est placere Deo,*[2] but for those who believe, Christ adds the reception of Baptism as the condition of incorporation into His kingdom. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved".[3] St. Paul likewise says that "as many of you as have been baptized . . . have put on Christ".[4] Baptism is the first in date of all the Sacraments; Divine Life is first infused into us at Baptism. All divine and supernatural communi-

[1] Joan. xvii, 3. [2] Hebr. xi, 6. [3] Marc. xvi, 16. [4] Gal. iii, 27.

cations converge towards this Sacrament or normally pre-suppose it: thence its value.

Let us stay to consider this; we shall find in it the origin of our titles to supernatural nobility, for Baptism is the Sacrament of Divine adoption and of Christian initiation.

At the same time we shall especially find in it, as in its germ, the double aspect of "death to sin" and "life unto God" which ought to characterize the whole existence of a disciple of Christ.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit, Who with His Divine virtue sanctified the baptismal waters in which we were regenerated, to make us understand the greatness of this Sacrament and the engagements it involves. Its reception marked for us the ever blessed moment when we became children of the Heavenly Father, brethren of Christ Jesus, and when our souls were consecrated as temples of this Divine Spirit.

I

Baptism is the Sacrament of Divine adoption.

I have shown you that it is by Divine adoption that we become children of God. Baptism is like the spiritual birth by which the life of grace is conferred upon us.

We possess within us, first of all, the natural life, the life we receive from our parents according to the flesh; by it we enter into the human family; this life lasts some years and then ends in death. If we had only this natural life we should never behold the Face of God. It makes us children of Adam, and, by that very fact, stained from our conception, with original sin. Issued from Adam's race, we have received a life poisoned at its source; we share in the disgrace of the head of our race; we are born, says St. Paul, *Filii irae*, "children of wrath"; *Quisquis nascitur, Adam nascitur, damnatus de damnato.*[5] This natural life, which plunges its roots in sin, is of itself sterile for heaven: *Caro non prodest quidquam.*[6]

But this natural life, *Ex voluntate viri, ex voluntate carnis,* is not the only one. God, as I have said, wills to give us a higher life which, without destroying the natural life in so far as it is good, surpasses it, upraises and deifies it. God wills to communicate His own life to us.

We receive this Divine life through a new birth, a spiritual birth by which we are born of God: *Ex Deo nati sunt.*[7] This life is a participation in the life of God; it is, of its nature, immortal.[8] If we possess

[5] St. Augustin. Enarr. in Ps. cxxxii. [6] Joan. vi, 64. [7] Joan. i, 13.
[8] *Renati non ex semine corruptibili sed incorruptibili per Verbum Dei* VIVI *et permanentis in aeternum.* I Petr. i, 23.

it here below we have the pledge of eternal beatitude, *heredes Dei;* if we have it not, we are forever excluded from the Divine fellowship.

Now the regular means, instituted by Christ, whereby we are to be born to this life, is Baptism.

You know that episode related by St. John,[9] of the interview of Nicodemus with Our Lord. This doctor of the Jewish law and member of the great council comes to find Jesus, doubtless so as to become His disciple, for he regards Christ as a Prophet. Our Lord replies to his question: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot seek the kingdom of God." Nicodemus, not understanding, asks Christ: "How can a man be born when he is old?" What does Our Lord reply? What He had already said, but explaining it: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[10] And Our Lord next contrasts the two lives, the natural and the supernatural. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And He concludes anew: "Wonder not, that I say to thee, you must be born again."

The Church, at the Council of Trent,[11] determined the interpretation of this passage, applying it to Baptism: The water regenerates the soul by the virtue of the Holy Spirit. The ablution of the water, sensible element, and the effusion of the Spirit, divine element, join to produce the supernatural birth. This is what St. Paul has already said: "God saved us, not by the works of justice we have done, but according to His mercy . . . by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost, Whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we may be heirs, according to hope of life everlasting."[12]

Thus, you see, Baptism constitutes the Sacrament of adoption. Plunged in the sacred waters, we are there born to the Divine Life; that is why St. Paul calls one who is baptized, "a new man".[13] God, in making us partakers of His nature in so liberal a manner, by a gift infinitely exceeding all we can hope or expect, creates us, so to speak, anew. We are—it is still the great Apostle's expression—"a new creature", *Nova creatura;*[14] and because this life is Divine, it is the whole Trinity Who makes this gift to us.

As the beginning of time, the Trinity presided over the creation of

[9] Joan. iii, 1 sq.

[10] To be baptized, that is to say, to be plunged in the water, in order to be purified, was something very well known to the Jews; it only remained to explain to them that there was to be a Baptism in which the Holy Spirit, uniting Himself to the water, would renew the spirit of man. Bossuet, *Meditations upon the Gospel.* 36th day.

[11] Sess. VII. *De Baptismo.* can. 2.

[12] Tit. III, 5-7. [13] Ephes. iii, 15; iv, 24. [14] II Cor. v, 17; Gal. vi, 15.

man; *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram;*[15] it is also in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost that our new birth is wrought. It is however, as the words of Jesus and of St. Paul denote, especially attributed to the Holy Ghost, because it is especially through love that God adopts us: *Videte qualem caritatem . . . dedit nobis Pater ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.*[16]

Stress is laid on this thought in the prayers for Holy Saturday when the Bishop blesses the baptismal waters to be used in the Sacrament. Listen to some of these prayers, they are very full of significance: "O Almighty and Eternal God . . . send forth the Spirit of adoption to regenerate the new people whom the font of baptism bringeth forth . . ." "Look down, O Lord, on Thy Church and multiply in her Thy new generations." Then the Bishop calls upon the Divine Spirit to sanctify these waters: "May the Holy Spirit vouchsafe by a secret impression of His Divinity to render fruitful this water for the regeneration of men: to the end that those who are sanctified in the immaculate womb of this divine font, and born again new creatures, may come forth a heavenly offspring." All the mysterious rites which the Church multiplies at this moment, all the invocations of this magnificent benediction replete with symbolism, are full of this thought: that it is the Holy Ghost Who sanctifies the waters in order that those who are plunged in them may be born to the divine life, after having been purified from all sin: *Descendat in hanc plenitudinem fontis virtus Spiritus Sancti . . . regenerandi foecundet effectu,* "so that all who receive this sacrament of regeneration may be born again, new children of perfect innocence".

Such is the greatness of this Sacrament; it is the efficacious sign of our Divine adoption; by Baptism we truly become the children of God and are incorporated with Christ. It opens the door to every heavenly gift. Remember this truth: all God's mercies towards us, all His condescension proceed from our adoption. When we turn the gaze of our soul towards the Godhead, the first thing that is unveiled to us of the eternal counsels regarding us, is the decree of our adoption in Jesus Christ; and all the favours God may shower down upon our souls here below, until the day when He communicates Himself to us for ever in the beatitude of His Trinity, have for their first link this initial grace of Baptism, to which they are attached. At this predestinated moment, we entered into the family of God, we became members of a Divine race, assured in principle, of an eternal inheritance. At the hour of our baptism, Christ engraves an indelible character upon our soul, we receive the *pignus Spiritus,*[17] the pledge of the Divine Spirit, which renders us worthy of the complacency of the

[15] Gen. i, 26. [16] I Joan. iii, 1. [17] II Cor. i, 22; v, 5.

Eternal Father, and assures us, if we are faithful to preserve this pledge, of all the favours God gives to those whom He regards as His children.

That is why the Saints, who have such clear insight into supernatural realities, have always held baptismal grace in most high esteem. The day of baptism was for us the dawn of Divine liberality and future glory.

II

Baptism will appear even greater to us if we consider it under the aspect of the *Sacrament of Christian initiation.*

Our Divine adoption is made, as I have said, in Jesus Christ. We only become children of God in order to be made conformable, by grace, to the Only-Begotten Son of the Father. Never let us forget that God has predestined us to adoption only in His beloved Son: *Praedestinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum per Jesum Christum . . . ut esset Ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus.*[18] Moreover, the satisfactions of Christ have merited this grace for us, as it is always Christ Who remains our Model when it is our will to live as children of the Heavenly Father. We shall perfectly understand this if we recall the manner in which neophytes were primitively initiated in the Christian mysteries.

In the first ages of the Church, as you know, Baptism was ordinarily conferred only on adults after a rather long period of preparation, during which the neophyte was instructed in the truths he was to believe. It was on Holy Saturday, or rather, during the very night preceding the Paschal solemnities, that the sacrament was administered in the Baptistery, a small building detached from the Church, as is to be seen in Italian cathedrals. The rites of the blessing of the baptismal font by the Bishop being ended, the catechumen, that is to say, the aspirant to Baptism, descends into the font: there he is as the Greek word indicates *βαπτισειν*, "plunged" into the water while the Bishop pronounces the sacramental words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The catechumen is then, as it were, buried under the waters whence he next comes out by the steps on the opposite side: there the god-father awaits and ministers to him. When all the catechumens are baptized, the Bishop gives each of them a white garment as a symbol of the purity of their hearts; then he signs the brow of each with an unction made of conse-

[18] Rom. viii, 29.

crated oil, saying: "May Almighty God Who has regenerated thee with water and the Holy Ghost, and has forgiven all thy sins, Himself anoint thee unto eternal life." When all these rites are ended, the procession returns to the basilica; the newly-baptized walk in front, clad in white and bearing lighted candles in their hands, the symbol of Christ, the Light of the world. Then begins the Mass of the Resurrection, celebrating the triumph of Christ come forth victorious from the tomb, and animated with the new life He communicates to all His elect. The Church is so happy in this new increase which she has just added to Christ's flock that during eight days they have a place apart in the basilica, and the liturgy will be full of the thought of them during all the Paschal octave.[19] As you see, these ceremonies are, to begin with, full of symbolism. They symbolize, according to St. Paul, Jesus Christ's death and burial, followed by His Resurrection, in which the Christian shares.

But there is something more than a symbol, there is the grace that is produced. And though the ancient rites, laying stress on this symbolism, have been simplified since the custom was introduced of baptizing infants, the virtue of the Sacrament remains the same. The substantial rites are retained, bearing in them the inward grace of the sacrament.

St. Paul gives us a very deep explanation of the primitive symbolism and of baptismal grace. This summary of his leading idea will make us better understand his words afterwards.

The immersion in the waters of the font represents the death and burial of Christ: we have our part in them by burying in the sacred waters sin and all affection to sin which we renounce. The "old man"[20] stained by Adam's sin, disappears under the waters and is buried (only the dead are buried) as in a tomb. The coming forth from the baptismal font is the birth of a new man, purified from sin, regenerated by the water made fruitful by the Holy Ghost; the soul of the baptized is adorned with grace, the principle of Divine life, adorned too, with the infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

[19] The catechumens, who are hindered by absence or insufficient preparation from receiving Baptism on the night of Easter, will receive it on the eve of Pentecost, the solemnity which commemorates the visible coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, and at the same time closes the Paschal season. The same solemn rites of the blessing of the font and of the administration of the sacrament are repeated. To the Paschal symbolism, which remains in its entirety, is then added more explicitly the intention of the Holy Spirit, Who, by His Divine virtue, regenerates the soul in the baptismal waters. Like the Masses for the Easter octave, those for the octave of Pentecost, contain more than one allusion to the newly-baptized.

[20] According to St. Paul, the "old man" means the natural man such as he is born and lives from the moral point of view as the son of Adam, before being regenerated in Baptism by the grace of Jesus Christ.

It was a sinner who was plunged into the font, he has there left all his sins, and it is a just man who comes forth from it, imitating Christ come forth from His tomb and living the Divine life.[21]

Such is the grace of Baptism, expressed by symbolism, a symbolism especially full of significance, when Baptism was administered on Easter night.

Let us listen to St. Paul's own words: "Know you not that all we who are baptized (in order to become members of the mystical body of Christ) are baptized in His death?" That is to say, that the death of Jesus is for us the model and meritorious cause of our death to sin in Baptism. Why are we to die? Because Christ our Model died: COMPLANTATI *facti sumus similitudini mortis ejus.* And what is it that dies? Vitiated and corrupt nature, the "old man". *Vetus homo noster* SIMUL *crucifixus est.* And why? That we may be free from sin: *Ut destruatur corpus peccati et ultra non serviamus peccato.* "We are," St. Paul continues, in explaining this symbolism, "buried together with Christ by baptism unto death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."[22]

This explains the engagement by which we are bound through the grace of Baptism to "walk in newness of life" that life which Christ our Model shows us in His Resurrection. Why is this? Because "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer: for he that is dead is justified from sin."[23] So then at Baptism we have renounced sin for ever.

That is not enough. We have besides received the germ of Divine life, and it is this germ that we must, likewise for ever, develop in us. This is what St. Paul adds: "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ": and that, unceasingly. "Knowing that Christ (Who is not only our Model, but Who infuses His grace in us), rising again from the dead, dieth no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him: for in that He

[21] *Ut unius ejusdemque elementi mysterio et finis esset vitiis et origo virtutibus.* Solemn blessing of the baptismal font on Holy Saturday.

[22] Rom. vi, 3-13. *Sicut ille qui sepelitur sub terra, ita qui baptizatur immergitur sub aqua. Unde et in baptismo fit trina immersio non solum propter fidem Trinitatis sed etiam ad repraesentandum triduum sepulturae Christi, et inde est quod in sabbato sancto baptismus in Ecclesia celebratur.* St. Thom. *In Epist. ad Rom.* c. VI, i, 1.

[23] "Sinful man," says St. Thomas, "is buried, by baptism, in the Passion and Death of Christ; it is as if he himself suffered and died with the sufferings and death of the Saviour. And as the Passion and Death of Christ have the power of satisfying for sin and all the debt of sin, the soul associated through Baptism with this satisfaction is free from all debt towards the justice of God." III, q. lxix, a. 2.

died to sin, He died once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."

St. Paul concludes his demonstration of this truth, with this application addressed to those who, by baptism, are partakers of the death and life of Christ, their Model: "So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus, Our Lord", with Whom you are incorporated by the grace of Baptism: ITA ET VOS *existimate, vos mortuos quidem esse peccato, viventes autem Deo in Christo Jesu.*[24]

Such are the words of the great Apostle. According to him, Baptism represents the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, and it produces what it represents: it makes us *die to sin*, it makes us *live in Jesus Christ.*

III

The better to understand this profound doctrine, we must clearly define this double aspect of the life of Christ which is reproduced in us from our Baptism and ought to affect our whole life.

As I have said, the Divine plan of the supernatural adoption conferred on Adam was crossed by sin; the sin of the head of humankind was transmitted to all his race and excluded it from the eternal kingdom. In order that the gates of heaven might be re-opened, reparation was needed for the offence against God, an adequate and total satisfaction which should efface the infinite malice of the sin. Man, being only a creature, was incapable of making it. The Incarnate Word, God made man, took the charge upon Himself; and on this account, all His life, until the moment of the consummation of His sacrifice, was marked with a character of death. Certainly, our Divine Saviour has neither contracted original sin, nor committed any personal sin, nor borne the consequences of sin incompatible with His Divinity, such as error, ignorance, sickness. He is in all things like to His brethren, save that He never knew sin. He is rather the Lamb Who takes away the sins of the world. He comes to save sinners. But God has laid upon Him the iniquity of sinners; and Christ, from His entrance into this world, having accepted the sacrifice His Father required of Him, all His existence, from the Crib to Calvary, bears the mark of the victim.[25]

See Him in the humiliations of Bethlehem; see Him fleeing before the wrath of Herod; toiling in a workshop, and, during His public life,

[24] Rom. vi, 3-13.

[25] Christ however, cannot be said to be a "penitent" in the strict sense of the word; a "penitent" must pay a personal debt to justice: Christ is a holy and sinless high priest; the debt He pays is the debt of the human race, but He only pays it because He substitutes Himself, out of love, for us all.

suffering the hatred of His enemies; see Him during His bitter Passion, from the moment of His Agony that filled Him with weariness and anguish, to the abandonment by His Father, on the Cross; see Him like a lamb led to the slaughter;[26] like a worm cursed and trodden underfoot,[27] for He is come "in the likeness of sinful flesh";[28] being the propitiation for the crimes of the whole world, it is not until His death on the gibbet that He pays off the universal debt. This death has won for us everlasting life. Jesus Christ slays and destroys sin at the very moment when death strikes Him. He, the innocent One, is the victim of all the sins of men:

Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando
Dux vitae mortuus regnat vivus.[29]

"Together Death and Life in a strange conflict strove: the Prince of Life Who died now lives and reigns."

The Prophet had long before exalted this triumph of Christ: "O Death, I will be thy death; O Death, where is thy victory?" And St. Paul, repeating these same words, replies: "Death is swallowed up in victory", the victory of Christ coming forth from the tomb.[30] *Mortem nostram moriendo destruxit et vitam resurgendo reparavit.*[31]

For, once risen, Christ has taken a new life. Christ dies no more, "death has no more dominion over Him". He has destroyed sin once for all, and His life is henceforward a life for God, a glorious life to be crowned on the day of His Ascension.

But, you will say; Has not Christ's life always been a life for God? Certainly it has; Christ Jesus only lived for His Father. On coming into the world, He gave Himself up entirely to His Father's will: *Ecce venio ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam.*[32] That is His food: *Meus cibus est ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me.*[33] He accepts even His Passion because He loves His Father: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem.*[34] Despite the repugnance of His sensibility, He takes the chalice offered in His agony and does not die till all is consummated. He can truly sum up all His life in saying that He always did the things that pleased His Father: *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper,*[35] for He ever sought His Father's glory: *Non quaero gloriam meam, sed honorifico Patrem meum.*[36]

So then it is true that, even before His Resurrection, Our Lord only lived for God. His life was entirely devoted to the interests and glory

[26] Jerem. xi, 199. [27] Ps. xxi, 7. [28] Rom. viii, 3.
[29] Sequence for Easter Sunday. [30] I Cor. xv, 54-55; cf. Osee xiii, 14.
[31] Preface for Paschal time. [32] Hebr. x, 9. [33] Joan. iv, 34.
[34] Ibid. xiv, 31. [35] Ibid. viii, 29. [36] Ibid. 49-50.

of His Father; but, until then, His life was also entirely shadowed with the character of a victim;—whilst, once risen from the tomb, free henceforth from any debt towards Divine justice, Christ no longer lives except for God. It is henceforward a perfect life, a life in all its fulness and splendour, without any infirmity, any perspective of expiation, death, or even suffering: *Mors illi ultra non dominabitur.* All in the Risen Christ bears the character of life—glorious life, of which the wonderful prerogatives of liberty and incorruptibility are manifested, even here below, to the dazzled eyes of the disciples, in His body freed from all servitude; a life which is an uninterrupted song of thanksgiving and praise; a life to be for ever exalted on the day of the Ascension, when Christ was definitely to take possession of the glory due to His Humanity.

This double aspect of death and life characterizing the existence of the Incarnate Word amongst men, and realizing its maximum of intensity and splendour in His Passion and Resurrection, ought to be reproduced in every Christian, in all those who have been incorporated with Christ in Baptism, for we became disciples of Jesus in the sacred font, by an act symbolizing His Death and Resurrection. That is what St. Augustine so well says: "Our way is Christ: therefore look at Christ. He has come to suffer in order to merit glory; to seek to be scorned in order to be exalted. He has come to die but also to rise again."[37] This is the very echo of what St. Paul says: *Ita et vos existimate.* We should regard ourselves as dead to sin,[38] as having renounced sin, so as only to live for God. When we contemplate Christ, what do we find in Him? A mystery of death and of life: *Traditus est propter delicta nostra et resurrexit propter justificationem nostram.*[39] The Christian continues in his life this double element that makes him one with Christ. St. Paul is very explicit on this point; he says: "buried with Him in Baptism, in Whom also you are risen again. . . . And you, when you were dead (to eternal life) in your sins. . . . He hath quickened together with Him, forgiving you all offences."[40] As Christ left the winding-sheet—the image of His state of death and life subject to suffering—behind Him in the tomb, so have we left all our sins in the baptismal waters; in the same way that Christ came forth free and living from the sepulchre, so we have come forth from the sacred font, not only purified from all sin, but with the soul adorned, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, with grace, the principle of Divine life, and its train of virtues and gifts. The soul has become a

[37] *Sermo* LXII, c. 2.

[38] "To live to sin", "to die to sin", are familiar expressions with St. Paul; they signify "to remain in sin", "to renounce sin".

[39] Rom. iv, 25. [40] Col. ii, 12-13.

temple where the Holy Trinity abides, and the object of Divine complacency.

IV

There is one truth we must not lose sight of, and to which St. Paul has already alluded. It is that this Divine, God-given life is only in a state of germ. It must grow and develop in the same way as our renunciation of sin, our "death to sin" must unceasingly be renewed and sustained.

We lost everything at once by a single fault of Adam, but in Baptism God does not give us back at once all the integrity of the Divine gift. In order that it may be a source of merit because of the efforts it calls forth, He leaves in us concupiscence, the source of sin, which tends to diminish or destroy the Divine life. Therefore our whole existence ought to be the realization of what Baptism inaugurates. By Baptism, we communicate in the mystery and divine virtue of Christ's death and risen life. "Death to sin" is wrought; but on account of the concupiscence remaining in us, we must maintain this death by continual renunciation of Satan, of his suggestions and works, and the solicitations of the world and the flesh. Grace is the principle of life in us, but it is a germ we must cultivate; it is that kingdom of God within us that Our Lord Himself compares to a grain of mustard-seed which becomes a great tree. So it is with the Divine life in us.

Listen how St. Paul points out this truth. He tells the Colossians that by Baptism they have stripped themselves of the old man with his works of death (descended from Adam): and have put on the new man created in justice and truth (the soul regenerated in Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost) "according to the image of Him that created him."[41] St. Paul likewise tells the faithful of Ephesus who have been taught in the school of Christ, "to put off, according to former conversation, the old man who is corrupted according to the desire of error, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."[42] As long then as we are making our earthly pilgrimage here below, we must pursue this double work of death to sin and life for God: *Ita et vos existimate.*

In God's designs this death to sin is definitive, and this life is, of itself, immortal: but we can lose this life and fall again into death by sin. Our work therefore is to guard and develop this germ until at the last day we arrive at the fulness of the age of Christ. All Christian asceticism proceeds from baptismal grace. Its aim is to cultivate the

[41] Col. iii, 9-10. [42] Ephes. iv, 20-24.

Divine germ cast into the soul by the Church on the day of her children's initiation, so that being free from all obstacle, it may open out and blossom. *Christian life is nothing else but the progressive and continuous development, the practical application, throughout our whole life, of this double supernatural result of "death" and of "life" produced by Baptism.* There is all the programme of Christianity. In the same way, too, our final beatitude is nothing else but the total and definitive freedom from sin, death, and suffering, and the glorious unfolding of the Divine life sown in us when we received this sacrament.

As you see, the very life and death of Christ are reproduced in our souls from the moment of baptism: but the death is unto life. Oh! if we understood those words of St. Paul: *Quicumque in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis.* "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ."[43] Not only have we put on Christ as an outer garment, but we are clad inwardly with Him.[44] We are "engrafted" on Him, in Him, says St. Paul, for Christ is the Vine, we are the branches, and it is this Divine sap that flows in us[45] to transform us into Him: *In eamdem imaginem transformamur.*[46] By faith in Him, we have received Him in Baptism: His death has become *our* death to Satan, the works of Satan, and to sin; Christ's life becomes *our* life; that initial act by which we were made children of God, made us the brothers and sisters of Christ, incorporated us with Him, made us members of His Church, animated us with His Spirit. Baptized in Christ, we are born, through grace, to Divine life in Christ. That is why, says St. Paul, we ought to walk *in novitate vitae.*[47] Let us walk no longer in the sin we have renounced, but in the light of faith, under the action of the Divine Spirit Who will grant us to bring forth by good works numerous fruits of holiness.

[43] Gal. iii, 27.

[44] This truth is signified by the white garment that used to be put on the neophytes coming forth from the baptismal font. At present, at the baptism of children, the priest, after the regenerating ablution, places a white cloth on the head of the baptized.

[45] *Si radix sancta et rami . . . Tu autem cum oleaster esses . . . socius radicis et pinguedinis olivae factus es.* Rom. xi, 16. sq. There is a magnificent prayer of the Church which contains all this doctrine, namely, the one that is said on Whitsun Eve shortly before the solemn benediction of the baptismal font, and the administration of Baptism to the catechumens: "O Almighty and Eternal God, Who by Thy only Son hast shown Thyself to us as the Heavenly Husbandman; Thou dost cultivate with love the branches rendered fruitful through their union with this same Christ, so that they may bring forth more abundant fruit; let not the thorns of sin enter the hearts of the faithful whom like a vine transplanted from Egypt, Thou hast made to pass through the baptismal font; protect them by Thy sanctifying Spirit that they may be enriched by a continual harvest of good works." *Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui per unicum Filium tuum, Ecclesiae tuae demonstrasti te esse cultorem, omnem palmitem fructum in eodem Christo tuo qui vera vitis est, afferentem, clementer excolens ut fructus afferat ampliores; fidelibus tuis quos velut vineam ex Aegypto per fontem baptismi transtulisti, nullae peccatorum spinae praevaleant, ut Spiritus tui sanctificatione muniti, perpetua fruge ditentur.*

[46] II Cor. iii, 18.

[47] Rom. vi, 4.

Let us often renew the virtue of this sacrament of adoption and initiation by renewing the promises made in Baptism, so that Christ, born in our souls by faith upon that day, may grow more and more in us *ad gloriam Patris*. That is a very useful practice of piety. St. Paul, in his letter to his disciple Timothy, admonishes him to stir up the grace of God that he received at his priestly ordination. I would say the same thing to you of your baptismal grace: stir up in yourselves the grace received at Baptism, by renewing the promises then made. For example, when after Communion, while Our Lord is really present in our hearts, we renew with faith and love our dispositions of repentance, of renunciation of Satan, sin, and the world, so as to attach ourselves only to Christ and His Church, then the grace of Baptism springs up from the depth of our souls, where the character of Baptism remains indelibly engraved. And this grace produces, through the virtue of Christ, Who dwells in us with His Spirit, as it were a new death to sin, a new inflowing of Divine life, a new intensity of union with Jesus Christ.

Thus, as St. Paul says, the outward man, the natural man, approaches ever nearer to death; but the inward man that has received Divine life by the supernatural birth of Baptism, and been created again in the righteousness of Christ, "is renewed day by day". *Licet is qui foris est, noster homo corrumpatur, tamen is qui intus est,* RENOVATUR DE DIE IN DIEM.[48]

And this renewal, inaugurated at Baptism, continued during our whole Christian existence, remains until we arrive at the glorious perfection of eternal immortality: *Quae enim videntur, temporalia sunt: quae autem non videntur, aeterna sunt.*[49] Here on earth, this Divine life is hidden in the depth of the soul. It certainly manifests itself outwardly by actions; but its principle is hidden within us. At the last day only, when *Christ our Life* shall appear, then we "also shall appear with Him in glory": *Mortui estis et vita vestra abscondita est sum Christo in Deo: cum* CHRISTUS *apparuerit* VITA VESTRA, *tunc et vos apparebitis cum ipso in gloria.*[50]

Whilst awaiting the coming of that blessed day when our inward renewal will shine forth in its eternal beauty, we ought often to *thank God* from the depths of our hearts for this Divine adoption given at Baptism: it is the initial grace whence all others proceed for us. All our greatness has its source in Baptism that gave us Divine life. Without this Divine life, human life, however full and brilliant it may outwardly appear, is worth nothing for eternity; it is Baptism that

[48] II Cor. iv, 16. [49] Ibid. 18. [50] Col. iii, 3-4.

gives true fruitfulness to our lives. This gratitude ought to be manifested by a generous and constant fidelity to our baptismal promises. We ought to be so penetrated with the sentiment of our supernatural dignity as Christians that we shall reject all that is contrary to that name, and only seek after what is conformable thereto.[51]

Gratitude is the first sentiment baptismal grace should cause to arise within us. *Joy* is the second. We ought never to think of our Baptism without a deep sense of inward gladness. On the day of our Baptism we are born, in principle, to everlasting beatitude. We hold the very pledge of it in this sanctifying grace then given to us; having entered into the family of God, we have a right to share in the heritage of the Only Son. What greater motive of joy could there be for a soul here below than to think that, on this day of her Baptism, the Eternal Father looked upon her with love, and, naming her His child, called her to share in the blessings that overflow from Christ!

Lastly and above all, our souls ought to be full of great *confidence*. In our relations with our Heavenly Father, we ought to remember we are His children through being partakers of the filiation of Christ Jesus, our Elder Brother. To doubt of our adoption and of the rights it gives us is to doubt Christ Himself. Let us never forget we put on Christ on the day of our Baptism: *Christum induistis*, or rather we have been incorporated with Him. We have therefore the right to come before the Eternal Father, and say to Him: *Ego sum primogenitus tuus:* to speak in the name of His Son, to ask Him with absolute confidence for all we need.

When we were created, the Holy Trinity said: "Let Us make man to Our image and likeness"; when adoption was conferred on us at Baptism, the Holy Trinity engraved on our souls the very features of Christ. And that is why when the Eternal Father sees us clad in sanctifying grace, making us like to His Divine Son, He cannot but grant us what we ask of Him—not in our own name, but in that of the One in Whom He is well pleased.

Such is the grace and power that Baptism bestows: it makes us, by supernatural adoption, brothers and sisters of Christ, capable in all truth of sharing His Divine life and everlasting inheritance: *Christum induistis.*

O Christian, when wilt thou understand thy greatness and dignity? . . . When wilt thou proclaim, by thy works, that thou art of a Divine race? . . . When wilt thou live as a worthy disciple of Christ? . . .

[51] *Deus . . . da cunctis qui christiana professione censentur et illa respuere quae huic inimica sunt nomini et ea quae sunt apta sectari.* Collect for the 3rd Sunday after Easter.

A. DEATH TO SIN

III. *DELICTA QUIS INTELLIGIT?*

SUMMARY. *Death to sin,* the first fruit of baptismal grace, *first aspect of Christian life.* I. Mortal sin, practical *contempt* of the rights and perfections *of God; cause of Christ's sufferings.* II. Mortal sin *destroys grace,* the principle of the supernatural life. III. It *exposes* the soul *to the eternal privation of God.* IV. Danger of *venial sins.* V. To overcome *temptation* by watchfulness, prayer and confidence in Jesus Christ.

BAPTISM, by its symbolism and the grace it produces, as St. Paul shows us, marks all our Christian life with the double character of "death to sin" and of "life for God". *Ita et vos existimate.* It is true that Christianity is, properly speaking, a life: *Veni ut vitam habeant,* Our Saviour tells us; it is the Divine life which flows into each of our souls from the Humanity of Christ where it is in its fulness. But this life does not develop in us without effort; the condition of its development is the destruction of what is opposed to it, that is to say, sin. Sin is the real obstacle that hinder the Divine life from developing and even from being maintained within us.

But perhaps you will say: Has not baptism destroyed sin in us? Certainly it blots out original sin, and, when it is conferred on an adult, personal sins as well. It even remits the debt of sin, it produces in us "death to sin". In God's designs, this death is definitive; we ought not again to fall into sin: *Et ultra non serviamus peccato.*

However, baptism has not taken away concupiscence; this source of sin remains within us; God has willed it to be so. He has willed that our free choice should be exercised in the conflict and hence reap for us, as the Council of Trent says, "a full harvest of merits".[1] This "death of sin", brought about in principle at baptism, becomes then for us a condition of life; we must weaken the action of concupiscence within us, as far as possible; it is at this price that the Divine life will develop in our soul and this will be in the same measure in which we renounce sin, habits of sin and all attachment to it.

[1] Catechism, ch. xvi.

One of the means of attaining this necessary destruction of sin is to hate it; we make no compact with an enemy that we hate. In order to have this hatred of sin, it is necessary to know its deep malice and infernal ugliness. But who can know the malice of sin? To be able to fathom it, we should have to know God Himself Whom it offends; and that is why the Psalmist exclaims: "Who can understand sins", *Delicta quis intelligit?*[2]

Let us, however, endeavour by the light of reason, and above all of revelation, to gain some idea of what sin is. Let us suppose a baptized soul that knowingly and voluntarily commits a grievous sin, that deliberately violates in a grave matter, one of the Divine commandments. What is it this soul does? What becomes of it? We know it displeases God; that it ranks itself among the enemies of Christ to crucify Him; finally, that it destroys the Divine life within itself. That is the work of its sin.

I

Sin, it has been said, is "the evil of God".

This term is not, of course, to be taken to the letter, suffering being incompatible with the Divinity. Sin is God's evil, because it is the negation by the creature of the existence of God, of His truth, His sovereignty, His holiness, His goodness. This soul, of which I have been speaking, in voluntarily performing an action contrary to God's will practically denies that God is sovereign wisdom and has the power to establish laws; it practically denies the holiness of God and refuses to give Him the adoration due to Him; it practically denies that God is omnipotent and has the right of claiming the obedience of beings that receive their life from Him; it denies that God is supreme goodness worthy of being preferred to all that is not Himself; it puts God beneath the creature. *Non serviam:* "I know Thee not, I will not serve Thee", says this soul, repeating the words of Satan on the day of his revolt. Does it say them with the lips? No, at least not always; perhaps it would not like to do so, but it says them in act. Sin is the practical negation of the Divine perfections; it is the practical contempt of God's rights: practically, if such a thing were not rendered impossible by the nature of the Divinity, this soul would work evil to the Infinite Majesty and Goodness; it would destroy God.

And was it not this that happened? When God took to Himself a human form, did not sin slay Him?

I have already said that the Passion of Christ is the most striking

[2] Ps. xviii, 13.

revelation of God's love, *Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet.*[3] Neither is there a deeper revelation of the immense malice of sin. Let us for a few moments contemplate the sufferings that the Incarnate Word endured when the hour came for Him to expiate sin; we can hardly form any conjecture into what an abyss of agony and humiliation sin caused Him to descend.

Christ Jesus is God's own and only Son. In Him His Father is well pleased; all the work of the Father is to glorify Him: *Clarificavi et adhuc clarificabo;*[4] for He is full of grace, grace superabounds in Him; He is "a high priest holy and innocent"; though He is like unto us, He however knows neither sin nor imperfection. "Which of you," said He to the Jews, "shall convince Me of sin?"[5] "The prince of this world (that is to say, Satan) . . . in Me hath not anything."[6] This is so true that it is in vain His most bitter enemies, the Pharisees, searched into His life, examined His doctrine, spied upon all His actions, as hatred knows how to do, and sought to ensnare Him in His speech. They could find no pretext to condemn Him; in order to invent one, they had to have recourse to false witnesses. Jesus is purity itself, the reflection of His Father's infinite perfections, "the brightness of His glory".[7]

And behold how the Father dealt with His Son when the moment came for Jesus to pay in our place the debt due to justice for our sins; behold how the "Lamb of God" was stricken when He substituted Himself for sinners. The Eternal Father willed with that will which nothing can resist "to bruise Him in infirmity": *Voluit contere eum in infirmitate.*[8] A flood of sadness, weariness, fear and languor enters even into the holy soul of Jesus till His immaculate body is bathed in a sweat of blood. He is so distressed and overwhelmed by the torrent of our iniquities that, in the repulsion felt by His sensible nature, He beseeches His Father that He may not drink the bitter chalice presented to Him: *Pater mi, si possible est, transeat a me calix iste.*[9] On the eve of His Passion at the Last Supper He had not spoken thus: *Volo, Pater,* "I will", He then said to His Father, for He is His equal; but now, the sins of men which He has taken upon Himself cover Him with shame and it is as a culprit He prays: *Pater, si possible est,* "Father, if it is possible . . ." But it is the hour of justice, the hour when the Father wills to deliver up His own Son to the power of darkness: *Haec est hora vetra et potestas tenebrarum.* Betrayed by one of His apostles, abandoned by the others, denied by their chief, Christ Jesus becomes an object of mockery and outrage in the hands of varlets.

[3] Joan. xv, 13. [4] Ibid. xii, 28. [5] Ibid. viii, 46. [6] Ibid. xiv, 30.
[7] Hebr. i, 3. [8] Isa. liii, 10. [9] Luc. xxii, 42.

Behold Him, the Almighty God, struck with blows, His adorable Face, which is the joy of the Saints, covered with spittle. He is scourged, a crown of thorns is pressed upon His Head, a purple mantle is flung in derision over His shoulders, a reed is placed in His hand; then the soldiers bend the knee before Him in insolent mockery. What an abyss of ignominy for One before Whom the angels tremble! Contemplate Him, the Master of the Universe, treated as a malefactor, and an impostor, placed on a level with an infamous robber whom the rabble prefers before Him! Behold Him, outlawed, condemned, fastened to the cross between two thieves; enduring the agony of the nails being dug in His hands and feet and the torture of thirst! He sees the people He has laden with benefits wag their heads in scorn; He hears the malicious sarcasms of His enemies: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Him come down from the cross and then, but only then, we will believe in Him."

Contemplate that picture of the sufferings of Christ traced long before, by the prophet Isaias: "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him. Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him as it were a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins. . . . The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth. . . . He is cut off out of the land of the living: for the wickedness of My people have I struck Him . . . and the Lord was pleased to bruise Him in infirmity. . . ."[10]

Is that enough? No, not yet. Our Divine Saviour has not yet sounded the lowest depth of sorrow. O my soul, behold thy God hanging on the cross; He has no longer even the semblance of humanity, He has become "the outcast of the people": *Ego sum vermis et non homo, opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis.*[11] His body is but a single wound; His soul has melted away, as it were, under suffering and derision. And at this moment, the Gospel tells us, Jesus cries out: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Jesus is abandoned by His Father. We can never know what an abyss of suffering was this abandonment of Christ by His Father; it is an unfathomable mystery. Jesus abandoned by His Father! Yet throughout His life has not Jesus always done His Father's will? Has He not fulfilled the

[10] Isa. liii, 2, 59. [11] Ps. xxi, 7.

mission He received of manifesting the Father's name to the world: *Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus?*[12] Is it not through love—*Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem*[13]—that He delivers Himself up? Most certainly, yes. Then wherefore, O Eternal Father, dost Thou thus strike Thy well-beloved Son? "For the wickedness of My people": *Propter scelus populi mei percussi eum.*[14] Christ having at this moment delivered up Himself for us, so as to give full and entire satisfaction for sin, the Father no longer sees in His Son anything except the sin which He has taken upon Himself to such a degree that this sin appears to be His own: *Eum qui non noverat peccatum, pro nobis peccatum fecit;*[15] He is "made a curse for us": *Factus pro nobis maledictum;*[16] His Father abandons Him and although, at the summit of His being, Christ retains the ineffable joy of the beatific vision, this abandonment plunges His soul in such profound sorrow that it wrings from Him this cry of infinite anguish: "My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" Divine justice giving itself free course to punish the sin of all mankind has fallen like an impetuous torrent on God's own Son: *Proprio Filio suo non pepercit Deus, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum.*[17]

If we want to know what God thinks of sin, let us look at Jesus in His Passion. When we behold God strike His Son, Whom He infinitely loves, with the death of the cross, we understand a little what sin is in God's sight.

One who deliberately commits sin brings his share to the sorrows and outrages which fell upon Christ. He has poured more bitterness into the chalice offered to Jesus in His agony. He was with Judas to betray Him; with the soldiery to spit into His Divine Face, to blindfold His eyes and strike Him; with Peter to deny Him; with Herod to turn Him into derision; with the rabble to clamour for His death; with Pilate cowardly to condemn Him by an iniquitous judgment; He was with the Pharisees to cover the dying Christ with the venom of their implacable hatred; with the Jews to mock and overwhelm Him with sarcasm. It was he who, at the supreme moment, gave Jesus gall and vinegar to assuage His thirst. . . . A soul who refuses to submit to the Divine law, causes the death of the only Son of God, Christ Jesus. If one day we have had the unhappiness wilfully to commit a single mortal sin, we were this soul. . . . We can say: "The Passion of Jesus was my work. O Jesus, nailed to the cross, You are the holy and immaculate High-Priest, the innocent and spotless Victim—and I am a sinner. . . !"

[12] Joan. xvii, 6. [13] Ibid. xiv, 31. [14] Isa. liii, 8. [15] II Cor. v, 21.
[16] Gal. iii, 13. [17] Rom. viii, 32.

II

Secondly, sin kills the Divine life in the soul, it severs the union that God wishes to contract with us.

I have said that God wills to communicate Himself to us in a manner surpassing the exigencies of our nature. He wills to give Himself to us, not only as an object of contemplation, but as an object of union; He effects this union here below, in faith, by grace. God is love; love tends to unite itself with the beloved object; it requires that the beloved object should make one with itself. That is Divine love.

That is also the love of Christ for us. He comes to give Himself, and to give Himself superabundantly as befits one who is God: *Veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant*;[18] He tells His disciples to "abide" in Him: *Manete in me et ego in vobis.*[19]

And to bring about this union, He does not count the cost; neither the humiliations of the manger, the obscurity and abasement of the hidden life, the fatigues of His public life, nor the agony of the Cross. To perfect this union, He institutes the Sacraments, He establishes the Church, He gives us His Spirit. The soul, for its part, when it contemplates all these Divine advances, tends to respond to them so as to unite itself to the Sovereign Good.

Now sin of itself forms an insuperable obstacle to this union.[20] Why so? According to the definition of St. Thomas, sin consists of turning away from God in order to turn towards creatures: *Aversio a Deo et conversio ad creaturam.*[21] It is an act committed knowingly and wilfully, by which man turns away from God, his Creator, Redeemer, Father, Friend and Last End on account of some creature. In this act there is a choice made, most often implicitly, but always essentially. The creature towards which we turn becomes our choice for the moment as far as that depends on us—for death may fix us in this choice for all eternity.

Such then is grievous deliberate sin: it is a choice made with the eyes open. It is as if one said to God: "My God, I know Thou dost forbid this thing, that in doing it I shall lose Thy friendship, but I shall do it just the same." You understand at once that mortal sin is of its nature opposed to union with God; we cannot by the same act unite ourselves to someone and turn away from him. "No servant," says Our Lord, "can serve two masters," *Nemo servus potest duobus dominis servire*;[22] "he will hate the one, and love the other." The

[18] Joan. x, 10. [19] Ibid. xv, 4.
[20] *Iniquitates vestrae diviserunt inter vos et Deum vestrum.* Isa. lix, 2.
[21] St. Thom. I-II, q. lxxxvii, a. 4. [22] Luc. xvi, 13.

soul that with its free will consents to grievous sin, prefers creatures and its own satisfaction to God, and the law of God; union with God is completely severed and the Divine life destroyed in that soul which becomes the slave of sin, *Omnis qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati.*[23] The slave of sin cannot be the servant of God. Between Belial and Jesus, between Lucifer and Christ, there is radical and absolute incompatibility.[24]

As the source of our holiness is Christ Jesus, you will understand too that if a soul turns away from Him by mortal sin, it turns away from life: this soul that had supernatural life only by the grace of Christ, becomes, by sin, a dead branch no longer receiving the Divine sap. This is why sin that totally breaks off the union established by grace is called mortal sin. You see what an evil it is for us, an evil opposed to our true beatitude: "He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul", *Qui diligit iniquitatem odit animam suam.*[25] Sin which destroys the life of grace within us renders us powerless to merit supernaturally; such a soul cannot merit anything *de condigno*, by strict and rigorous right, like one possessing grace, not even the grace of returning to God. If God grants contrition, it is through His mercy because He vouchsafes to stoop to His fallen creature. As you know, all the activity of a soul in a state of mortal sin is fruitless for heaven, however brilliant this activity may appear in the eyes of the world, in the natural domain; a withered branch, by its own fault no longer receiving the Divine sap of grace, the soul that remains in this state is likened by Christ Jesus Himself to dead wood, good for nothing but to be cast into the fire to be burnt: *In ignem mittent, et ardet.*[26]

III

I have said that Christ ever intercedes with His Father that grace may abound in His disciples: *Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis.*[27] But the soul that abides in sin no longer belongs to Christ, but to the devil. Satan takes the place of Christ in this soul. Placing himself in opposition to Christ, the devil becomes the accuser of this soul before God; day and night he claims it as his own: *Accusator fratrum nostrorum qui accusabat illos ante conspectum Dei nostri die ac nocte.*[28]

And suppose death surprises the soul in this state. Our Lord Himself has warned us that He will come "as a thief and thou shalt not

[23] Joan. viii, 34. [24] II Cor. vi, 14-16. [25] Ps. x, 6.
[26] Joan. xv, 6. [27] Hebr. vii, 25. [28] Apoc. xii, 10.

know at what hour I will come to thee".[29] The state of aversion to God then becomes unchangeable; the depraved disposition of the will, fixed in its term, is no longer subject to change; the soul can no longer return to the ultimate good from which it is for ever separated.[30] Eternity does but ratify and confirm the state of supernatural death freely chosen by the soul in turning away from God. It is no longer the time of probation and mercy; it is the hour of finality and justice: *Deus ultionum Dominus.*[31]

And this justice is terrible, because with a mighty hand God will then avenge His rights up to now voluntarily ignored and obstinately despised, in spite of so many Divine advances and appeals: *Quia fortis ultor Dominus.*[32]

Christ Jesus has willed, for the good of our souls, to reveal this truth to us: God knows all things in their depth and essence, and hence judges them infallibly with infinite exactitude, without an atom of exaggeration being mingled with His judgments: *Pondus et statera judicia Domini,*[33] for He judges all without passion: *Cum tranquillitate judicas.*[34] God is Eternal Wisdom, regulating all things with weight and measure; He is Supreme Goodness; He has accepted the abundant satisfaction given by Jesus upon the cross for the crimes of the world. And yet, when the hour of eternity strikes, God pursues sin with His hatred[35] into endless torment, into the outer darkness where, according to our blessed Saviour's own words, there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth;[36] into this gehenna where the fire is not extinguished;[37] where Christ showed the wicked rich man with the hardened heart beseeching the one who had once been the poor Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and come and place it on his burning lips, for he was "tormented in this flame".[38] Such is the greatness of the horror with which God, Whose sanctity and sovereignty are infinite, regards the deliberate and obstinate "no" with which the creature has responded to His commands: *Ibunt in supplicium aeternum*;[39] this soul, Jesus Himself says, will go into everlasting punishment.

Certainly this pain of inextinguishable fire is terrible; but what is it compared to the pain of being for ever deprived of God and of Christ? What is it to feel oneself eternally drawn with all the natural energy of one's being towards the enjoyment of God, and to see oneself eternally

[29] Ibid. iii, 3.
[30] St. Thom. IV. *Sentent.* L. q. ii, a. 1, q. 1.
[31] Ps. xciii, 1. [32] Jerem. li, 56. [33] Prov. xvi, 11. [34] Sap. xii, 18.
[35] This word "hatred" does not mean a sentiment existent in God, but the moral result produced by the presence of God in the creature for ever fixed in the state of sin and of rebellion against the divine law; God's hatred is the exercise of His justice. It is the consequence of the eternal laws following their free course.
[36] Matth. xxii, 13. [37] Marc. ix, 43. [38] Luc. xvi, 24. [39] Matth. xxv, 46.

thrust back? The essence of hell is this inextinguishable thirst for God which tortures the soul created by Him, for Him. Here below, it is possible for the sinner to avert his thoughts from God by occupying himself with creatures, but, once entered into eternity, he finds himself alone with God. And it is to lose Him for ever. Only those who know what the love of God is can understand what it is to lose the Infinite. To hunger and thirst for infinite beatitude, and never to possess it! *Discedite a me, maledicti:* "Depart from Me, ye cursed,"[40] says the Lord: "I know you not": *Nescio vos.*[41] I called you to share My glory and beatitude; I wished to fill you with all "spiritual blessings;[42] therefore I gave you My Son and filled Him with the fulness of grace that it might overflow upon you; He was the Way destined to lead you to Truth and Life; He accepted to die for you; He gave you His merits and satisfactions; He gave you the Church, He gave you His Spirit; with Him, what have I not given you, so that you might one day take part in the eternal banquet which I have prepared for the glory of this well-beloved Son? You have had years to make yourself ready for it and you would not; you insolently despised My merciful advances, you rejected light and life; now the time has gone by; depart from Me, ye cursed, I know you not, for you do not bear the likeness of My Son. There is only place in My kingdom for His brethren who, by grace, are like unto Him. Depart to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; because you chose sin, "you are of your father the devil"[43] and bear his image. *Nescio vos.* What torment to hear this sentence from the lips of the Eternal Father: Ye cursed, I know you not!

Then, says Jesus, sinners will cry out in despair. They will say to the mountains: "Fall upon us", and to the hills: "Cover us";[44] but all these damned, whom sin has for ever separated from God, are given up as a living prey to the gnawing worm of remorse which never dies, to the fire which is never extinguished, to the fury of demons, to the bitterest and saddest despair. Despite themselves, they are unwillingly bound to repeat those words of Scripture of which, in the light of eternity, they grasp the full intent so terrible for them: *Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum;*[45] *vera et justa judicia tua, justificata in semetipsa.*[46] "Thou art just, O Lord; and Thy judgment is right; the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves." The condemnation which everlastingly weighs upon us is our own work, the result of our will: *Ergo erravimus.*[47]

[40] Ibid. xxv, 41. [41] Ibid. 12. [42] Ephes. i, 1-3.
[43] Joan. viii, 44, et. I Joan. iii, 8.
[44] Luc. xxiii, 30. [45] Ps. cxviii, 137. [46] Ps. xviii, 10. [47] Sap. v. 6.

What an evil is that which, destroying Divine life in the soul, threatens it with so great a punishment! . . . If even once only, we have committed a deliberate mortal sin, we have deserved to be fixed in our choice for all eternity, and ought to say to God: It is Thy mercy that has saved me, *Misericordiae Domini quia non sumus consumpti.*[48]

Sin is the enemy of God, and it is because God is holy that He thus condemns sin for all eternity. If we truly loved God, we should feel as God does towards sin: *Qui diligitis Dominum, odite malum.*[49] It is written of our Lord: "Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity."[50] Let us ask Him, especially when praying at the foot of the crucifix, to make us share in this hatred of the one true evil of our soul.

Far be it from me to wish to establish our spiritual life on the fear of everlasting punishment. For, says St. Paul, we have not received the spirit of servile fear, the spirit of the slave who fears chastisement, but the spirit of Divine adoption.

However, do not forget that Our Lord, Whose words, as He Himself says, are principles of life for our souls,[51] tells us to fear not chastisement but the Almighty Who has power to cast our body and soul for ever "into gehenna". And note that when Our Lord gives this admonition of the fear of God to His disciples, He does so because they are His friends: *Dico autem vobis* AMICIS MEIS.[52] It is a testimony of love He gives them in thus instilling in them this salutary fear.

Holy Scripture proclaims that those are blessed who fear the Lord: *Beatus vir qui timet Dominum.*[53] Many of the sacred pages are filled with such praises. God demands of us this homage of holy fear, filial and full of reverence. There are impious men whose hatred of God touches on madness. Who was that atheist who said: "If there be a God I will undertake to endure His hell for all eternity, rather than to bow myself down before Him?" Madman! who could not put his finger in the flame of a candle without immediately withdrawing it!

See too how St. Paul insisted that Christians should keep themselves from all sin. He knew the incomparable riches of God's mercy to us in Christ Jesus, *Dives in misericordia*;[54] none has celebrated them better than he nor with more force and holy enthusiasm; none has known like him how to place in contrast with our weakness the triumph of the grace of Jesus; again, none has known like him how to inspire such confidence in the superabundance of Christ's merits and satisfactions; and yet he says "it is a fearful thing" for the soul after having obstin-

[48] Thren. iii, 22. [49] Ps. xcvi, 10. [50] Ibid. xliv, 8. [51] Joan. vi, 64.
[52] Luc. xii, 4. [53] Ps. cxi, 1. [54] Ephes. ii, 4.

ately resisted the Divine law, "to fall into the hands of the living God".[55]

O Father in Heaven, deliver us from evil! . . .

IV

But you will say, why do you speak thus? Have we not a horror of sin? Have we not the sweet confidence of never having been in this state of aversion towards God?

This is true; and, since your conscience bears you this inward testimony, return abundant thanksgiving to the Father "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love",[56] "Who hath made us . . . partakers of the lot of the Saints in light".[57] Rejoice also in that Jesus "hath delivered us from the wrath to come";[58] for, says St. Paul, we are already "saved by hope";[59] we even now hold the pledge of eternal life.[60]

However, whilst awaiting to hear the words of Jesus: "Come, ye blessed of My Father", resound in your ears—this happy sentence which will establish your dwelling in God for ever, remember that you bear this Divine treasure of grace in fragile vessels. Our Lord Himself tells us to watch and pray, for "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak".[61] There are not only mortal falls; there is also—and I touch here on a very important point—the danger of venial sins.

It is true that venial sins, even when repeated, do not of themselves prevent radical and essential union with God; they, however, diminish the fervour of this union because they are the beginnings of aversion to God proceeding from taking pleasures in creatures, from the weakness of the will, and from relaxing in the intensity of our love for God.

In this matter, we must make a necessary distinction. There are certain venial faults which escape us by surprise, which often result from our temperament, faults that we regret and seek to avoid; these are miseries which in nowise prevent the soul from attaining a high degree of divine union; they are effaced by acts of charity, by a good communion;[62] moreover they keep us humble.

[55] Hebr. x, 31. [56] Col. i, 13. [57] Ibid. 12-15.

[58] *Exspectare Filium ejus in caelis . . . Jesum qui eripuit nos ab ira ventura.* I. Thess. i, 10.

[59] Rom. viii, 24. [60] Ibid. 1. [61] Matth. xxvi, 41.

[62] "It cannot be doubted that the Eucharist remits and forgives the slight sins which are usually called venial. All that the soul led away by the ardour of concupiscence has lost of the life of grace by committing slight faults, the sacrament restores by effacing these little faults. . . . However, this only applies to the sins for which the soul has no longer any attraction." *Catechism of the Council of Trent,* c. xx, 1.

But what must be greatly dreaded are venial faults which have become habits or are fully deliberate: they are a real peril for the soul; they are too often a step towards a complete severance from God. When a soul is in the habit of responding with a *deliberate* "no" to God's will (in a small matter since it is question of venial sins), it cannot expect to remain long united to God. Why so? Because these faults, committed with cool deliberation, pass to a state of habit unstriven against, without the soul's feeling any remorse, and this necessarily results in diminution of supernatural docility, of watchfulness and strength to resist temptation.[63] Experience shows that, from a succession of wilful negligences in small things, we glide imperceptibly, but nearly always fatally, into grave faults.[64]

I will go even further. Let us suppose a soul that sincerely seeks God in all things, that truly loves Him and yet happens, through weakness, to consent voluntarily to grievous sin. That does occur sometimes. In the world of souls there are abysses of frailty. For this soul such a fall is an immense misfortune, for divine union is severed; but this grave sin, being of a passing nature, is much less dangerous and above all less fatal for this soul than venial faults of habit or of full deliberation are for another. Why is this? The first soul is humbled, rises again, and finds in the rememberance of the sin it has committed an excellent motive for remaining in a state of humility, and a powerful incentive to a more generous love and a greater faithfulness than ever.[65] While, with the other, the venial faults frequently consented to without remorse, place it in a *state* in which the supernatural action of God is constantly being thwarted. Such a soul can in no way aspire to a high degree of union with God; on the contrary, the Divine action becomes ever weaker within it; the Holy Spirit is silent; and this soul will almost infallibly fall before long into more grievous sin. Doubtless, like the former, it will at once seek to enter again into God's grace; but this is not so much from the love of God as from fear of punishment; then the remembrance of its sin will not be for it, as for the former, the point

[63] We do not say a diminution of grace itself; that would wrongly imply that grace would come to an end by disappearing with the ever increasing number of venial sins; but a diminution of the fervour of our charity. This diminution might however produce such supernatural torpor in the soul that it would be disarmed in presence of a grave temptation and succumb to the evil.

[64] St. Thom. I-II, q. lxxxviii, a. 3. *Utrum peccatum veniale sit dispositio ad mortale.*

[65] "The Saints of the Lord", writes St. Ambrose, in giving the example of David, "burn with impatience to overcome in the spiritual combat and reach the goal of salvation. If, led away by the weakness of their nature more than by the wish to sin, it happens to them as it does to all men, to have a fall, they rise up again more eager for the race, and, under the spur of shame, undertake still greater combats. Far then from having been an obstacle for them, their fall may be considered as an incentive to increase their speed." *De apologia David*, L. I, c. 2.

of departure for newly rising again towards God, as this soul has not within it any intensity of love, its supernatural life will continue to be mediocre, ever exposed to the least shaft of the enemy and to fresh falls. There is no certainty of salvation, still less of perfection for such a soul that constantly puts obstacles in the way of the Divine action and makes no serious efforts to leave this state of tepidity.[66]

It might happen, through weakness, impulse, or surprise, that we fall into a grave sin; but never let us say by our deeds, if not by words: "Lord, I *know* that such a thing, however slight it may be in itself, displeases Thee; but I *will* to do it." As soon as God asks anything of us, whatever it is, even if it should be our heart's blood, we must say: "Yes, Lord, here I am." If not we shall stand still in the way of divine union, and to stand still is often to recede; it is nearly always to expose ourselves to grievous falls.

V

These habits of deliberate sin, even simply venial, are not formed all at once, but, as you know, only little by little. "Therefore, watch ye and pray," as Our Lord says, "that ye enter not into temptation."[67]

Temptation is inevitable. We are surrounded by enemies; the devil "goeth about seeking whom he may devour",[68] the world envelops us with its corrupting seductions or with its spirit, so much opposed to the supernatural life. This is why it is not in our power to avoid all temptation; it is often even independent of our will. Certainly, it is a trial, a very painful one sometimes, especially when accompanied by spiritual darkness. We are then inclined to call happy those only who are never tempted. But God, on the contrary, declares by the sacred scribe that those who endure temptation without exposing themselves to it are "blessed": *Beatus vir qui suffert tentationem*.[69] Why is this? Because, says Our Lord, "when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life". Never let us be discouraged then on account of the frequency or extent of temptation; let us, of course, watch with the greatest care over the treasure of grace, and avoid dangerous occasions; but let us always keep full of confidence. Temptation, however violent and prolonged it may be, is not a sin; its turbid waters may "come in unto the soul", *Intraverunt aquae usque ad animam meam*;[70] but we

[66] *Licet frigidus sit pejor tepido, tamen pejor est status tepidi: quia tepidus est in majori periculo ruendi sine spe resurgendi.* Cornel. a Lapide, *In Apoc.* iii, 16.
[67] Matth. xxvi, 41. [68] I Petr. v, 8. [69] Jac. i, 12. [70] Ps. lxviii, 2.

may be reassured as long as the fine point of the soul, which is the will, rises above them: it is this point alone, *Apex mentis*, which God regards.

Moreover, St. Paul tells us, "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it".[71] The great Apostle is himself an example of this. He tells us that lest he should exalt himself on account of his revelations, God placed what he called a thorn in his flesh, a figure of temptation; "there was given me . . . an angel of Satan, to buffet me".[72] "Thrice," he says, "I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me. And He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity"—that is to say in making it triumph by God's grace.

It is indeed Divine grace that helps us to surmount temptation, but we have to ask for it: *Et orate*. In the prayer Christ taught us, He makes us beseech our Father in Heaven "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". Since Jesus has willed to place this prayer upon our lips, let us often repeat it whilst relying on the merits of Our Saviour's Passion.

Nothing is more efficacious against temptation than the remembrance of the Cross of Jesus. What did Christ come to do here below if not to "destroy the works of the devil".[73] And how has He destroyed them, how has He "cast out"[74] the devil, as He Himself says, "if not by His death upon the Cross?" During His mortal life, Our Lord cast out devils from the bodies of the possessed; He cast them out also from souls, when He forgave the sins of Magdalen, of the paralytic man and of so many others; but it is above all, as you know, by His blessed Passion that He overthrew the dominion of the devil. At the precise moment when, in bringing about the death of Jesus at the hands of the Jews, the devil hoped to triumph for ever, he himself received the death-blow. For Christ's death destroyed sin, and gave as a right to all who are baptized, the grace of dying to sin.

Let us then lean by faith upon the cross of Christ Jesus, as our baptism gives us the right to do. The virtue of the cross is not exhausted. In baptism we were marked with the seal of the cross, we became members of Christ, enlightened by His light, and partakers of His life and of the salvation He brings to us. Hence, united to Him, whom shall we fear? *Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea; quem timebo?*[75] Let us say to ourselves: "He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear

[71] I Cor. x, 3. [72] II Cor. xii, 17. [73] I Joan. iii, 8.
[74] Ibid. xii, 31. [75] Ps. xxvi, 1.

thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. . . . A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand but it (the devil) shall not come nigh thee. . . . Because he hoped in me (says the Lord) I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known my name. He shall cry to me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him. I will fill him with length of days, and I will show him my salvation."[76]

Let us therefore beseech Christ to be our support in the struggle against the devil, against the world, the devil's accomplice, and against the concupiscence that is within us. Like the Apostles, beaten about by the tempest, let us cry out to Him: "Lord, save us, we perish"; and putting forth His hand, Christ will save us.[77] Like Christ Who willed to be tempted so as to set us an example and merit for us the grace to resist—although on account of his Divinity, this temptation was purely exterior—let us force Satan to withdraw, saying to him as soon as he presents himself: There is only one God, Whom I adore and serve. On the day of my baptism I chose Christ, Him alone will I hear.[78]

With Christ Jesus, our Head, we shall overcome the powers of darkness. Christ is in us since our baptism; and, says St. John "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world",[79] that is to say than Satan. The devil did not overcome Christ. "The prince of this world cometh and in Me he hath not anything",[80] says Jesus. Hence he will not be able to vanquish us or ever make us fall into sin, if, watchful over ourselves, we remain united to Jesus and rely upon His words and His merits: *Confidite, ego vici mundum.*[81] A soul that strives to remain united to Christ by faith is above its passions, above the world and the devils; all may rise up within it, and around it; Christ will hold it, by His Divine strength, above all assaults.

Christ is called in the Apocalypse, "the lion of the tribe of Juda",[82] and again it is said of Him: "He went forth conquering that He might conquer",[83] because, by His victory, He has gained for His followers the power to conquer in their turn. That is why, after having reminded

[76] Ps. xc, 11-12; 14-16.
[77] Matth. viii, 25.
[78] St. Gregory Nazianzen willed that every baptized person should repulse Satan in these terms full of sublime assurance: "Strong in the sign of the cross with which thou hast been marked, say to him (the devil): I also have been made in the image of God and I have not been like thee cast down from heaven on account of my pride. I have put on Christ; by baptism, Christ has become mine own. It is for thee to bend the knee before me." St. Greg. Nazian. *Orat.* 40 *in sanct. baptismate,* c. 10.
[79] I Joan. iv, 4. [80] Joan. xiv, 30. [81] Ibid. xvi, 33.
[82] Apoc. v, 5. [83] Ibid. vi, 2.

us that death, the fruit of sin, has been destroyed by Christ Jesus Who has brought us immortality, St. Paul exclaims "Thank be to God Who has given us the victory (over the devil, the father of sin; victory over sin, the source of death; victory, in fine, over death itself) through Our Lord Jesus Christ": *Stimulus mortis peccatum est. . . . Deo autem gratias qui dedit nobis victoriam—per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.*[84]

[84] I Cor. xv, 56-57.

IV. THE SACRAMENT AND THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE

SUMMARY. I. How *God manifests His mercy by forgiving* sins. II. The *sacrament* of penance; its elements: *Contrition,* is particular efficacy in the sacrament; the *confession* of sins constitutes a *homage to the humanity of Christ; satisfaction* is only of value if it is united to the expiation made by Jesus. III. *The virtue* of penance *necessary so as to maintain* within us the *fruits of the sacrament;* nature of this virtue. IV. Its end: *to restore order and make us like to Jesus crucified.* General principle and *divers applications* of its exercise. V. How *in Christ* we find the value of our acts of abnegation and at the same time, *consolation.* VI. following the example of the Church, *to unite the acts of the virtue* of penance *to the sacrament.*

IN explaining the symbolism of baptism to the first Christians, St. Paul writes to them that they must no longer, through sin, let the Divine life received from Christ die in them: *Ultra non serviamus peccato.*[1] The Council of Trent says: "If our gratitude towards God, Who has made us His children by baptism, was equal to this ineffable gift, we should keep the grace received in this first sacrament intact and pure."[2]

There are privileged souls, truly blessed, that never lose the Divine life. But for others, for those who succumb to sin, is there no means of recovering grace, of rising anew to the life brought to us by Christ? Yes, this means exists in the Sacrament of Penance, instituted by Christ Jesus, the Man-God. It is a wonderful monument of Divine wisdom and mercy in which God has harmonized these two things: He finds in it His glory while, at the same time, He grants us forgiveness.

I

You know that magnificent collect that the Church, guided by the Holy Ghost, places on our lips in the Mass for the tenth Sunday after

[1] Rom. vi, 6. [2] Sess. XIV, cap. 1.

Pentecost: "O God Who dost manifest Thy almighty power above all in showing pardon and pity; multiply upon us Thy mercy": *Deus qui omnipotentiam tuam parcendo maxime et miserando manifestas, multiplica super nos misericordiam tuam.*

That is a revelation God gives us by the mouth of His Church. It is in forgiving us, *parcendo*, in having pity, *miserando*, that God shows above all, *maxime*, His *power*. In another collect, the Church says it is one of God's most exclusive properties "always to have mercy and to spare": *Deus cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere.*[3]

Pardon presupposes debts to be forgiven; pity and mercy can only exist where there is misery. What is the meaning of the word: *misericordia*? It is the taking, in some manner, the misery of others into one's own heart.[4] Now God is goodness itself and infinite love. *Deus caritas est;*[5] and, in presence of misery, His goodness and love become mercy. That is why we say to God: *Deus meus, misericordia mea,* "O my God, Thou art my mercy".[6]

In the collect I have just quoted, the Church beseeches God to "multiply upon us His mercy": *Multiplica super nos misericordiam tuam.* Why is that? Because our miseries are immense. It is of them we can say: *Abyssus abyssum invocat*, the abyss of our miseries, of our faults, of our sins, calls upon the abyss of Divine mercy. We are all indeed miserable, we are all sinners, some more than others, it is only a question of degree: *In multis offendimus omnes*, says the apostle St. James;[7] and St. John says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."[8] He goes even further for he adds that if we say this "we make God a liar": *Si dixerimus quoniam non peccavimus, mendacem facimus eum.*[9] Why? Because God obliges us all to say: "Forgive us our trespasses", *Dimitte nobis debita nostra.* God would not oblige us to make this demand if we had no *debita.* We are all sinners; this is so true that the Council of Trent has condemned those who say it is possible to avoid all sin, even venial sin, without a special privilege from God such as was granted to the Blessed Virgin Mary.[10] Therein lies our misery.

But this misery must not discourage us. God knows it and that is why He has compassion on us "as a father hath compassion on his

[3] Collect for the Rogation days. "O God, to Whom it alone belongs always to have mercy and to spare, favourably receive our prayer, that we and all Thy servants, who are bound by the chain of sins, may, by the compassion of Thy goodness, mercifully be absolved."

[4] *Misericors dictur aliquis quasi habens miserum cor.* St. Thom. I, q. xxi, a. 3.

[5] I Joan. iv, 8. [6] Ps. lviii, 18. [7] Jac. iii, 2.

[8] *Si dixerimus quoniam pecatum non habemus ipsi nos seducimus et veritas in nobis non est.* I Joan. i, 8.

[9] Ibid. i, 10. [10] Sess. vi, can. 22.

children": *Quomodo miseretur pater filiorum, misertus est Dominus.*[11] For he knows that not only are we taken out of nothing, but formed of the dust of the earth. *Quoniam ipse cognovit figmentum nostrum.*[12] He knows this mass of flesh and blood, of muscles and nerves, of misery and weakness that constitute the human being and inclines us to fall so easily into sin, and taking this into account, He has made it possible for us to return to Him not once only, but as Our Lord says,[13] seventy times seven, that is to say, an indefinite number of times.

God places His glory in relieving our misery, in forgiving our faults; He wills to be glorified in manifesting His mercy towards us because His beloved Son has satisfied for us. Throughout eternity, says St. John, we shall sing a canticle to God and to the Lamb. And what will this canticle be? Will it be the *Sanctus* of the angels? God did not spare those that rebelled; from the moment of their first revolt, He cast them down for ever, because they had not these weaknesses, these miseries, that are our lot. The faithful angels sing the holiness of God, the holiness that could not for an instant suffer the defection of the rebels. But as for us, what will our song be? . . . That of God's mercy: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo;*[14] this verse of the psalmist will be like the refrain of the canticle of love we shall sing to God. We shall sing also to the Lamb. And what shall we sing to Him? *Redemisti nos, Domine, in sanguine tuo.*[15] "Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord Jesus, in Thy precious blood"; Thou hast had such pity on us that Thou didst shed Thy Blood to save us from our miseries, to free us from our sins, as we say every day in Thy name at Mass: "This is the chalice of My blood which was shed for the remission of sins"; *Effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.*

Yes, there is great glory due to God for this mercy He uses towards the sinners who make their claim through the satisfactions of His Son Jesus. Hence we can understand that one of the greatest affronts that can be made to God is to doubt of the mercy and pardon He gives us through Jesus Christ.

However, after baptism, this pardon is only granted to us if we bring forth "fruits worthy of penance".[16] In this, says the Holy Council of Trent, there is a great difference between baptism and the sacrament of penance. For an adult, it is true, baptism requires the detestation of sin and the resolution to shun it, but no special acts of satisfaction or reparation are demanded from him. Read the rite of baptism: you will find no mention of any work of penance to be accomplished. It is the

[11] Ps. cii, 13. [12] Ibid. 14. [13] Matth. xviii, 22.
[14] Ps. lxxxviii, 2. [15] Apoc. v, 9. [16] Luc. iii, 8.

total and absolute remission of sin and the penalty incurred by sin. Why is that? Because this sacrament, the first as to date, constitutes the first fruits of the Blood of Jesus given to the soul.

But, continues the Council, if after baptism, after we have been grafted upon Christ Jesus, after we have been "delivered from the slavery of sin and of the devil and have become temples of the Holy Ghost, we voluntarily fall again into sin, we can only recover grace and life on the condition of doing penance; thus has it been established by Divine justice, as is most fitting".[17]

Now, penance may be considered as a *sacrament*, and also as a *virtue* that manifests itself by acts proper to it.

Let us say a few words about both.

II

The sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, to restore to us the life of grace when it has been lost after baptism; it contains in itself unlimited grace of forgiveness. But in order that it may act in the soul, all obstacle opposed to this action must be removed. And what is the obstacle? Sin and attachment to sin.

The sinner must make the avowal of his sin—integral avowal as to mortal sin; then he must destroy the attachment to sin by contrition and the acceptation of the imposed satisfaction.

As you know, *contrition* is the most important of all these essential elements, as regards the penitent. Even if the accusation of sin should be materially impossible, the necessity of contrition would remain. Why is that? Because by sin, the soul turned away from God to take pleasure in the creature; if we wish God to communicate Himself to us anew and restore life to us, we must repudiate any attachment to the creature in order to turn again towards God. This act includes the detestation of sin and the firm purpose of no more committing it; otherwise the detestation of sin would not be sincere. Such is contrition.[18] As the word indicates, it is a sentiment of sorrow that crushes the soul enlightened as to its unhappy state and its offence against God, and that causes it to return to Him.

Contrition is perfect when the soul is sorrowful for having offended God Who is infinite Goodness: this perfection proceeds from the *motive* which is the highest possible, namely, the Divine Majesty. But

[17] Sess. xiv, cap. 2 and 8.

[18] *Contritio animi dolor ac detestatio est de peccato commisso, cum proposito non peccandi de caetero.* Concil. Trid. Sess. xiv, cap. 4.

it goes without saying that this contrition, perfect in its nature, admits of a whole series of degrees in its intensity. Whatever be this degree of intensity, the act of contrition, being perfect in its motive, effaces the mortal sin at the moment the soul makes this act. But in the present economy, in virtue of the positive precept ordained by Christ, the accusation of mortal sins remains obligatory when it is possible.

Imperfect contrition, such as proceeds from the shame felt on account of the sin, of the chastisement merited by sin and of the loss of eternal beatitude, has not of itself this effect of effacing mortal sin; but it suffices to do so, with the absolution given by the priest.

These are the truths I must simply recall to you. But there is one important point to which I want to draw your attention.

Outside confession, contrition already places the soul in opposition to sin; the hatred of sin to which contrition gives rise constitutes the beginning of the destruction of sin. This act is in itself pleasing to God.

In the sacrament of penance, contrition (as, moreover, the other acts of the penitent: accusation of faults and satisfaction) bears a sacramental character. What does this signify? In every sacrament, the infinite merits gained for us by Christ are applied to the soul in order to produce the special grace contained in the sacrament. The grace of the sacrament of penance is to destroy sin in the soul, to weaken the remnants of sin and to restore life; or if there are only venial faults, to remit them and increase grace. In this sacrament, the hatred of sin felt by Christ in His agony and upon the Cross—*Dilexisti justitiam et odisti iniquitatem*[19]—passes into our soul there to produce the destruction of sin. This destruction of sin effected by Christ's substitution of Himself for us in His Passion is reproduced in the penitent. Contrition remains what it is, even outside the sacrament: i.e., an instrument of death to sin; but in the sacrament Christ's merits give to this instrument, as it were, infinite and supreme efficacy. It is at this moment, Christ washes our souls in His precious Blood: *Christus lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo.*[20]

Never forget that each time we receive this sacrament worthily and with devotion, even if there were only venial faults to be confessed, the Blood of Christ is poured abundantly on our souls to revive them, to strengthen them against temptation, to make them generous in the struggle against attachment to sin, and to destroy in them the roots and effects of sin. The soul finds in this sacrament special grace to

[19] Ps. xliv, 8. [20] Apoc. i, 5.

uproot its vices and purify itself more and more so that the life of grace may be recovered or increased in it.

Before confession, let us then always arouse our faith in the infinite value of the expiation of Jesus Christ. He bore the weight of all our sins: *Iniquitates nostras ipse portavit.*[21] He offered Himself for each one of us: *Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me.*[22] His satisfactions are superabundant; He has acquired the right of forgiving us: there is no sin that cannot be washed away by His Divine blood. Let us stir up our faith and our confidence in His inexhaustible merits, the fruits of His Passion. I have said that when He journeyed through Palestine and one came to Him to be delivered from the devil, Christ Jesus required faith in His Divinity; it was only to faith He granted the healing of diseases or the remission of sins: "Go, thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath made thee whole." It is faith that must, before all, accompany us to this tribunal of mercy: faith in the sacramental character of all our acts; faith especially in the superabundance of the satisfaction made by Jesus to His Father for us.

Certainly, our acts (contrition, confession, and satisfaction), do not produce the grace of the sacrament; but besides being previously necessary in order that the grace of the sacrament may be applied to us, since they are "like the matter of the sacrament",[23] the degree of this grace is measured, in fact, by the dispositions of our soul.

That is why it is an eminently useful practice to beg from God the grace of contrition on the morning of the day of confession while assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Why? Upon the altar, as you know, the immolation of Calvary is renewed. The Holy Council of Trent declares that "the Lord, appeased by this oblation, grants the grace and gift of penance, and forgives, on account of it, all crimes and sins, however enormous they may be".[24]

Does the Mass then forgive sins directly? No, that only belongs to perfect contrition and to the sacrament of penance. But when we

[21] Isa. liii, 11. [22] Gal. ii, 20; cf. Ephes. v, 2.

[23] The Holy Council of Trent says: "Like the matter". *Quasi materia.* (Sess. XIV, cap. 3). The Catechism of the Council of Trent (Ch. xxi, § 3.) gives the following explanation: "It must be pointed out to the faithful that the great difference between this sacrament and the others, is that the matter of the latter is always something natural or artificial, whilst the acts of the penitent, contrition, confession, and satisfaction are, as the Holy Council of Trent says, *like the matter* of this sacrament. And these acts are necessary on the part of the penitent for the integrity of the sacrament and for the entire remission of sins. This is of divine institution. Likewise, the acts we are speaking of are considered as even part of the sacrament. And if the Holy Council simply says that the acts of the penitent are *like the matter* of the sacrament, that is not to say they are not the true matter of it; but that they are not of the same kind as the other sacramental matter, which are taken from without, like the water in baptism and the chrism in confirmation."

[24] *Hujus sacrificii oblatione placatus Dominus gratiam et donum poenitentiae concedens, crimina et peccata etiam ingentia dimittit.* Sess. xxii, cap. 2.

assist devoutly at this Sacrifice which is the same as that of the Cross, when we unite ourselves to the Divine Victim, God gives us, if we ask with faith, sentiments of repentance, of firm purpose, of humility and confidence, which lead us to contrition and make us capable of receiving with fruit the remission of our sins, acquired for us by Jesus at the price of His Divine Blood.

To contrition must succeed *confession.*

The sacrament of penance was instituted under the form of judgment. "All that you bind or loose on earth shall be bound or loosed in heaven; those sins shall be remitted that you remit." But it is for the culprit to accuse himself of his faults to the judge who is to pass sentence. And who is this judge? The avowal of my sins is due to God alone; no one, neither angel, nor man, nor devil, has the right of penetrating into the sanctuary of my conscience, into the tabernacle of my soul. God alone merits this homage, and He claims it in this sacrament, for the glory of His Son Jesus.

I have said, in speaking of the Church, that since the Incarnation, God wills, in the ordinary economy of His providence, to govern us by men who supply the place of His Son for us. It is like an extension of the Incarnation and, at the same time, a homage rendered to Christ's holy humanity. Why is that?

To redeem us from sin, and restore Divine life to us, Christ, the Incarnate Word, descended into the depths of humiliation; it was as man that He humbled Himself, that He suffered, died and expiated. And because He thus humbled Himself to save the world, Christ has been exalted by His Father: *Exinanivit semetipsum . . . usque ad mortem crucis:* PROPTER QUOD *et Deus exaltavit illum;*[25] the Father wills to glorify His Son as man: *Clarificavi et adhuc clarificabo.*[26] And what is the glory He gives to Him? He makes Him sit at His right hand in the heights of heaven; He wills "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess" that Jesus is the only Saviour;[27] for the Father has given Him all power "in heaven and in earth".[28] And among the attributes of this power is that of judging every soul. Jesus Himself tells us: "The Father . . . hath given all judgment to the Son that all men may honour the Son"; because His Son, in His humanity, won the right of being the Redeemer of the World: *Neque Pater judicat quemquam, sed omne judicium dedit Filio* UT *omnes honorificent Filium*[29] *. . . quia Filius hominis est.*[30] Christ has been established by His Father the Judge of

[25] Philipp. ii, 7-9. [26] Joan. xii, 25. [27] Philipp. ii, 10-11.
[28] Matth. xxviii, 18. [29] Joan. v, 22. [30] Ibid. 27.

heaven and earth; here below, He is the merciful Judge; at the last day, as Our Lord declared at the time of His Passion, "The Son of Man shall come in the clouds with great power and glory",[31] to judge the living and the dead.

Such is the glory the Father wills to give His Son; and it is the glory He wills we should give Him in this sacrament. Suppose a man has committed mortal sin; he comes before God, he deplores his sin; he afflicts his body with macerations and promises himself he will accept every expiation. God says to him: "That is good, but it is My will you should acknowledge and declare the power of My Son Jesus, by submitting yourself to Him in the person of the one who represents Him towards you; and that one is he who, on the day of his priestly ordination, received communication of My Son's judicial power." If the sinner will not give this homage to the holy Humanity of Jesus, God refuses to hear him; but if he submits with faith to this condition, then there are no sins, no crimes, no iniquities that God does not forgive and for which He does not renew the pardon as often as the repentant and contrite sinner beseeches Him to do so.

This confession must be made from a heart touched by repentance. Confession is not a narration, it is an accusation; one must come to it like a criminal before his judge. This simple and humble confession has two enemies: routine and scrupulosity. Routine results almost invariably from habit; the best means of destroying it is to arouse our faith in the greatness of the sacrament. As I have said, each time that we go to confession, even when we have only to accuse ourselves of venial faults, the Blood of Jesus is offered to His Father to obtain pardon for us. Scruple consists of taking the accidental for the essential, of dwelling, without reason, on details and circumstances that add nothing to the substance of the sin, if even there be a sin. In confession, we must have the intention of saying all we have on our conscience; this becomes easy if we have the excellent habit of examining every evening the actions of the day. If there is a doubt, and this doubt weighs on us, we must accept the repugnance that often results from this as part of the penance, and say what we know. God does not will that confession should be a torture for the soul, but on the contrary that it should bring peace.[32]

Look at the Prodigal Son. When he returns to his father, does he dwell on endless distinctions? We cannot imagine him doing so. And

[31] Marc. xiii, 26.

[32] *Sane vero res et effectus hujus sacramenti, quantum ad ejus vim et efficaciam pertinet, reconciliatio est cum Deo, quam interdum in viris piis et cum devotione hoc sacramentum percipientibus, conscientiae pax et serenitas, cum vehementi spiritus consolatione consequi solet.* Concil. Trid. Sess. xiv, cap. 3.

yet his father forgives all, forgets all and prepares a feast to celebrate his son's return.

So it is with our heavenly Father. God finds His glory in forgiving us, because all forgiveness is granted us in virtue of the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. The Precious Blood of Jesus was shed to the last drop for the remission of sin; the expiation that Christ offered to the justice, holiness, and majesty of His Father is of infinite value. Now each time God pardons us, each time the priest gives us absolution, it is as if all the sufferings, all the merits, all the love, all the Blood of Jesus were presented to His Father and applied to our souls to restore life to them or to increase it when it is only a case of venial sins. *Sacramentum poenitentiae (instituit) quo lapsis, post baptismum, beneficium mortis Christi applicatur.*[33] "May Jesus Christ absolve thee," says the priest, "and I in virtue of His authority, absolve thee from thy sins." Can one forgive the offence committed against another? No; yet the priest says: "I absolve thee." How can he say it? Because it is Christ Who says it by his mouth.

At each confession, we seem to hear Jesus say to His Father: "O My Father, I offer Thee for this soul, the satisfactions and merits of My Passion; I offer Thee the chalice of My Blood shed for the remission of sins." Then, just as Christ ratified the judgment and the pardon given by the priest, so the Father in His turn confirms the judgment and pardon granted through His Son. He says. "I also forgive thee."

Those are words to establish the soul in peace. Think what it is to receive from God the assurance of pardon. If I have offended a loyal man and he, holding out his hand to me, says: "I forget all", I do not doubt of his forgiveness. In the sacrament of penance, it is Christ, the Man-God, Truth in person, Who says to us: "I forgive thee", and can we doubt His forgiveness? No, we cannot doubt it; this pardon is absolute and irrevocable. God say to us: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow."[34] He says again: "I have blotted out thy iniquities and thy sins as a mist."[35] God's forgiveness is worthy of Himself. What a king does is royal; what a God does is divine: let us believe in His love, in His word, in His forgiveness.

This act of faith and confidence is extremely pleasing to God and to Jesus, for it is homage rendered to the infinite value of Christ's merits; it proclaims that the fulness and universality of the pardon God grants to men here below is one of the triumphs of the Blood of Jesus.

To the contrition of the heart and to the confession of the lips, must be joined the humble acceptation of the *satisfaction* imposed.

[33] Concil. Trid. Sess. xiv, cap. 1. [34] Isa. i, 18. [35] Ibid. xliv, 22.

This satisfaction is an essential element of the sacrament. In former days, the work of satisfaction to be accomplished was considerable. At present the satisfaction imposed by the confessor for the penalty due to sin is reduced to a few prayers, an almsdeed, or a practice of mortification. Certainly Our Lord satisfied for us superabundantly; but, says the Council of Trent,[36] equity and justice require that having sinned after baptism we should bring our share of expiation in payment of the debt contracted by our sin.

This satisfaction, being sacramental, Christ Jesus, through the mouth of the priest who represents Him, unites it to His own satisfactions. That is why it is of great efficacy in producing "death to sin" in the soul. In making this satisfaction for our sins, says the Holy Council of Trent, we render ourselves conformable to Jesus Christ Who offered His Father infinite expiation for our sins. The Council goes on to say that "these works of satisfaction while being accomplished by us, only however derive their value from our union with Jesus Christ; without Him indeed we of ourselves can do nothing; but strengthened by His grace, we are able to suffer all things. And so all our glory is to belong to this Christ in Whom we live and in Whom we make satisfaction when we bring forth worthy fruits of penance; it is from Him that these acts of satisfaction derive their merit, it is by Him they are offered to the Father, and it is for His sake that the Father accepts them."[37]

You see what a wonderful sacrament the wisdom, power and goodness of God has ordained for our salvation. God finds in it His glory and that of His Son, for it is in virtue of the infinite merits of Jesus that pardon is bestowed upon us and Divine life restored or increased. Let us join, even while here on earth, in singing the canticle sung by the elect to the Lamb. O Christ Jesus, immolated for us, Thou hast redeemed us by Thy Precious Blood, all praise, all power, all glory and all honour be to Thee for ever and ever!

III

Even when God has forgiven us, there remain in us the remnants of

[36] Sess. xiv, cap. 8.

[37] Let us quote this very beautiful text: *Dum satisfaciendo patimur pro peccatis, Christo Jesu qui pro peccatis nostris satisfecit, ex quo omnis sufficientia nostra est, conformes efficimur, certissimam quoque inde arrham habentes, quod si compatimur et conglorificabimur.* NEQUE VERO ITA EST SATISFACTIO HAEC, QUAM PRO PECCATIS NOSTRIS EXSOLVIMUS, UT NON SIT PER CHRISTUM JESUM; *nam qui ex nobis tamquam ex nobis nihil possumus, eo cooperante, qui nos confortat, omnia possumus. Ita non habet homo unde glorietur; sed omnis gloriatio nostra in Christo est, in quo vivimus, in quo movemur,* IN QUO SATISFACIMUS, *facientes fructus dignos poenitentiae,* QUI EX ILLO VIM HABENT, AB ILLO OFFERUNTER PATRI, ET PER ILLUM ACCEPTANTUR A PATRE". Concil. Trid. Sess. XIV, cap. 8.

sin, evil roots ever ready to spring up and bring forth evil fruits. Neither baptism nor the sacrament of penance take concupiscence totally away. If then we wish Divine life to develop greatly in our souls, we must labour unceasingly to diminish these remnants of sin, to weaken these evil roots, that disfigure our soul in God's sight.

Besides the action of the sacrament of penance, an efficacious means exists for removing those scars of sin that prevent God from communicating His life to us in abundance.

This means is the *virtue* of penance. It is a habit which, when deeply implanted, constantly inclines us to the expiation of sin, and the destruction of what remains of it. This virtue must doubtless, as we are about to see, manifest itself by acts proper to it; but it is above all an habitual attitude of the soul—an abiding regret for having offended God and desire to make reparation for our faults. This habitual sentiment ought to inspire our acts of penance.

By these acts, man rises up against himself to avenge God's rights which he has trampled under foot. By his sins, he rose up against God, he opposed his will to the all-holy will of God; by his acts of penance he unites himself to God in His hatred of sin and to His justice that demands the expiation of it. The soul then sees sin by faith through the eyes of God. "I have sinned," it says, "I have committed an act of which I cannot measure all the malice, but that is so terrible, and so much violates God's rights, His justice, His holiness and love, that only the death of the Man-God could expiate it." Then, moved with sorrow, the soul says to God: "O my God, I detest my sin, I long to avenge Thy rights by penance, I would rather die than offend Thee again." That is the *spirit* of penance that urges and inclines the soul to make *acts* of expiation.

You will understand that this attitude of soul is necessary for all who have not lived in perfect innocence. When the motive is fear of hell it is good, says the Council of Trent;[38] God accepts it. But when the motive is love, it is excellent and perfect; the more the love of God increases within us, the more we feel the need of offering to God the sacrifice of "a contrite and humbled heart": *Cor contritum et humiliatum Deus non despicies;*[39] the more we feel the need of often saying to Him with the publican in the Gospel: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."[40]

When this feeling of compunction is habitual, it maintains the soul in great peace; it keeps it in humility: it becomes, too, a powerful instrument of purification. Compunction helps us to mortify those ill-regulated instincts, those perverse tendencies that might lead us into

[38] Sess. xiv, cap. 4. [39] Ps. l, 19. [40] Luc. xviii, 13.

fresh faults. One who has this virtue is careful to use all the means to be met with so as to make reparation for sin.[41]

The virtue of penance is, as regards ourselves, the greatest assurance of perseverance in the way of perfection, because it is, as we can easily see, one of the purest forms of love. One loves God so much, regrets so profoundly having offended Him, that one longs to repair and expiate: this is the source of a life of generosity and self-forgetfulness. "Holiness," says Father Faber, "has lost its principle of growth if it is separated from abiding sorrow for sin. For the principle of growth is not love only, but forgiven love."[42]

Some souls, even pious souls, feel sometimes a certain sense of repulsion in hearing the word penance; it is the same with that of mortification which expresses the same idea. Whence does this feeling of repulsion come? It ought not to astonish us, for it has a psychological foundation.

Our will necessarily seeks good in general, it seeks happiness, or that which seems to us to be such. Now mortification which refrains certain of our sensible tendencies, certain of our most natural desires, appears to these souls as opposed to happiness: therefore arises this repugnance towards all that constitutes the practice of self-renunciation.

Moreover, we too often see in mortification an end in itself, when we ought only to see in it a means, necessary certainly, even indispensable, but a means all the same. We do not detract from Christianity in considering self-renunciation only as a means.

Christianity is a mystery of death and of life, but the object of this death is to safeguard the Divine life in us. *Non est Deus mortuorum sed viventium.*[43] "(Christ), by dying destroyed our death, and by rising again restored our life": *Mortem nostram moriendo destruxit et vitam resurgendo reparavit.*[44] The essential work of Christianity, as well as the final end to which of its nature it tends, is a work of life; Christianity is the reproduction of the life of Christ in the soul.

Now, as I have said, Christ's life on earth can be summed up in this double aspect: "He was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification": *Traditus est propter delicta nostra et resurrexit propter justificationem nostram.*[45] The Christian dies to all that is sin, the better to live the life of God. Penance then serves primarily as the means of arriving at this aim of our life.

That is what St. Paul so clearly expressed: "Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may

[41] In another series of conferences, we will treat more at length of the importance of compunction in order to progress in the hidden life.

[42] *Growth in Holiness*, ch. xix. [43] Matth. xxii, 32.

[44] Preface of the Mass for Easter. [45] Rom. iv, 25.

be made manifest in our bodies."[46] It must be the constant aim to which we tend that the life of Christ which has its principle in grace and its perfection in love, may shine forth in us: such is the end; there is none other. To attain this end, mortification is necessary. St. Paul says: "They that are Christ's"—and we belong to Christ by our baptism —"have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences", *Qui sunt Christi, crucifixerunt carnem suam cum vitiis et concupiscentiis suis.*[47] And again he says still more explicitly: "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live",[48] live the Divine life.

IV

Let us see more in detail why and how we must "die" so as "to live"; why and how we must, as Our Lord said Himself, "lose" ourselves so that we may save ourselves.[49]

God created the first man in rectitude: *Deus fecit hominem rectum.*[50] In Adam, the senses were entirely under the dominion of the reason and the reason was perfectly subject to God. Since Adam's sin, this harmonious order has disappeared, the inferior appetite has become rebellious, and the flesh strives against the spirit. "Unhappy man that I am . . ." cries St. Paul, "the good which I will I do not, but the evil which I will not, that I do."[51] It is concupiscence, the prompting of the inferior appetite, that inclines us to disorder and urges us to sin. Now this "concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life"[52] ever tends to increase, to bear fruits of sin and supernatural death. Hence, in order that the life of grace may be maintained and developed in us it is needful to mortify, that is to say, reduce so as to render powerless, "put to death", not our nature itself, but that which in our nature is the source of disorder and sin—the ill-regulated instincts of the senses, the wandering of the imagination, perverse inclinations. The reason of the primary necessity for penance is to re-establish order in us and restore to reason, itself being subject to God, the dominion over the inferior powers, so as to allow the will to yield entirely to God. That is life. Never forget this: Christianity demands mortification first of all so as to immolate in us that which is opposed to life. The Christian labours, by self-renunciation, to root out from the soul all element of spiritual death, so that the Divine life may increase in it with more liberty, ease and fulness.

[46] II Cor. iv, 10. [47] Gal. v, 24. [48] Rom. viii, 13. [49] Joan. xii, 25.
[50] Eccl. vii, 30. [51] Rom. vii, 19-24. [52] I Joan. ii, 16.

From this point of view, mortification is a rigorous consequence of our baptism, of our Christian initiation. St. Paul tells us that the neophyte on being plunged into the sacred font, there dies to sin and begins to live for God: this double formula, as we have seen, sums up all Christian conduct. We cannot be Christians unless we first reproduce Christ's death in ourselves, by renouncing sin: *Ita et vos existimate, vos mortuos esse peccato.*

You may perhaps ask in what does this death to sin consist, how far does it extend, and how are we to apply this law of renunciation in ourselves?

Of course the application of this law can be varied almost indefinitely. The state of soul is not the same for everyone, and the stages that the same soul passes through are many.

St. Gregory the Great[53] lays down the principle that the more the supernatural order has been disturbed by the predominance of the inferior appetite, the longer the work of renunciation must last. In souls where sin has taken deep root, the sources of spiritual disorder are more active, the life of grace more liable to be lost; for such as these, mortification ought to be more vigilant, more vigorous, more continuous. In other souls, for example, those that are no longer at the beginning of the spiritual life, the roots of sin are lessened and weakened; grace finds a more generous and fruitful soil; for them the necessity of penance, *in so far as it has for its end to cause death to sin,* will be less imperious, the obligation of renunciation less extensive. But for these faithful souls in which grace abounds, there arises another motive which we will touch on later—the motive of more closely resembling Christ, our Chief, the Head of the mystical body of which all the members are bound together by the law of solidarity. And the field that opens out before these souls is boundless.

That is a general principle, but whatever be the measure of its application, there are obligations every Christian must fulfil: the exact keeping of God's commandments, of the precepts of the Church (the observance of Lent, the Vigils and Ember days); daily fidelity to the duties of one's state to the law of labour! watchfulness in order constantly to shun the many occasions of sin; all this often involves acts of renunciation, and sacrifices costly to nature.

There is next the struggle against the special defects that may beset and weaken the Divine life. In one, it is self-love; in another, levity of mind; in this one, jealousy or anger; in that one, sensuality or sloth. These defects, if not resisted, are the occasion of a thousand sins and

[53] *Homil. XX in Evang.* c. 8. See also *Reg. pastor.* P. iii, c. 29.

voluntary infidelities that hinder God's action in us. However little these vices may be apparent, Our Lord expects of us that we should take the trouble to see them, and that we should labour generously by constant watchfulness over ourselves, by the careful examination of our daily actions, and by corporal mortification as well as by interior self denial, to extirpate them. He expects us to take no respite until the roots of these vices are so weakened that they can no longer spring up and bear fruit. For the more these roots decrease, the more the Divine life grows strong within us, because it has great liberty to unfold.

Lastly, there are the trials that, under God's Providence, come to us in the course of life and that we must accept as true disciples of Christ Jesus: such as sickness and suffering; the loss of those dear to us, adversities, the oppositions and contradictions that thwart the realization of our plans; the failure of our undertakings; our disillusionments; moments of weariness, hours of sadness, the burden of the day that weighed so heavily on St. Paul[54] till, as he says himself, he was weary even of life: *Ut etiam taederet vivere*[55]—all those miseries that detach us from ourselves and creatures by mortifying our nature and making it die in us little by little: *Quotidie morior.*[56]

V

"I die daily." Those are St. Paul's words; but if he died daily, it was that he might the better live the life of Christ.

And in speaking of his sufferings, he wrote those words that appear so strange and are of such profound depth: "I . . . fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His (mystical) body, which is the Church."[57] Is there then something wanting to the sufferings, to the satisfactions of Christ? Certainly not. Their value is infinite. Christ's sufferings are the sufferings of the Man-God Who substituted Himself for us. Nothing is wanting to the perfection and plenitude of these sufferings; they were more than sufficient to redeem us all. IPSE *est propitiatio pro peccatis* TOTIUS *mundi.*[58] Then why does St. Paul speak of "filling up" these sufferings?

St. Augustine gives us the reply. The whole Christ, he says, is formed by the Church united to her Chief, and by the members (which we are), united to the Head (which is Christ). Christ, the Head of this mystical body, has suffered; the great expiation was that of Jesus; the members,

[54] Rom. ix, 2. [55] II Cor. i, 8. [56] I Cor. xv, 31. [57] Col. i, 24.
[58] I Joan. ii, 2.

if they wish to remain worthy of the Head, must in their turn bring their share of suffering and renunciation: *Impletae erant omnes passiones, sed in capite restabant adhuc* CHRISTI PASSIONES IN CORPORE; *vos autem estis corpus et membra.*[59]

Contemplate Christ Jesus on His way to Calvary, laden with His cross; He falls under the weight of this burden. If He willed, His Divinity would sustain His Humanity; but He does not will it. Why? Because, in order to expiate sin, He wills to feel in His innocent flesh the burden of sin. But the Jews fear He will not live to reach the place of crucifixion; they therefore constrain Simon the Cyrenean to help to carry His cross, and Jesus accepts his help.

Simon, in this, represents us all; as members of Christ's mystical body, we must help Jesus to bear His cross. It is a sure sign that we belong to Him, if, following Him, we deny ourselves and take up our cross: *Qui vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me.*[60] Here is to be found the secret of the voluntary mortifications of faithful souls, privileged souls, holy souls—those mortifications that afflict and macerate the body as well as those that repress even the lawful desires of the mind. Such souls have doubtless expiated their own sins, but love constrains them to expiate for those members of Christ's body who offend their Chief so that the vigour, beauty and splendour of this mystical body may not be diminished. If we truly love Christ, we shall, following the counsel of a prudent director, generously take our share of these voluntary mortifications which will make us less unworthy members of a crucified Head. Was it not this that St. Paul sought? Did he not write that he had suffered the loss of all things so that he might be admitted to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and be made conformable to His death? *Ad cognoscendum illum et sociestatem passionum illius, configuratus morti ejus.*[61]

If our nature feels some repulsion, let us ask Our Lord to give us the strength to imitate Him by following Him even to Calvary. According to the beautiful thought of St. Augustine, the innocent Christ, like a compassionate physician, reserved for Himself the dregs of the chalice of suffering and renunciation of which we have only to drink a few drops: *Sanari non potes nisi amarum calicem biberis; prior bibit medicus sanus, ut bibere non dubitaret aegrotus.*[62] For, says St. Paul, Christ knows, by experience, what sacrifice is. "We have not a high priest Who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are yet without sin."[63]

[59] *Enarrat. in Ps.* lxxxvii, c. 5. [60] Luc. ix, 23. [61] Philipp. iii, 8,10.
[62] *De verbis Domini. Serm.* xviii, c. 7 and 8. [63] Hebr. iv, 15.

I have said to what an extent Our Lord has shared our sufferings, but never let us forget that in thus sharing our sorrows and such of our miseries as were compatible with His Divinity, Christ has sanctified our sufferings, our infirmities, our expiations. He has merited for us that we may have the strength to bear them in our turn and that they may be accepted by His Father. But for this to be effected, we must unite ourselves to Our Lord by faith and love, and consent to carry our cross after Him. It is from this union that our sufferings and sacrifices derive their value; of themselves they have no value for heaven, but, when joined to those of Christ, they become extremely pleasing to God and salutary for our souls.[64]

This union of our will with Our Lord in suffering also becomes for us a source of solace.

When we suffer, when we are in pain, in sadness, in weariness, in adversity or difficulties, and we come to Jesus we are not delivered from our cross, for "the disciple is not above his master",[65] but we are comforted. Christ Himself has told us that He wills us to take up our cross; it is the indispensable condition for becoming His true disciple—but He promises too that He will refresh those who come to find in Him a balm for their sufferings. And He Himself invites us: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."[66] His words are infallible. If you go to Him with confidence, be assured He will turn tenderly towards you because, according to the words the Gospel applied to Him, He will be touched with compassion: *Misericordia motus*.[67] Was He not crushed under suffering to the point of crying out: "Father, let this chalice of bitterness pass from Me?" St. Paul expressly tells us that one of the reasons Christ wished to endure sorrow was that He might succour those who would come to Him.[68] He is the Good Samaritan Who bends over suffering humanity and brings to it, with salvation, the consolation of the Spirit of Love. It is from Him all true consolation is born for our souls. St. Paul repeats to us: "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also *by Christ* doth our comfort abound."[69] You see how he identifies his tribulations with those of Jesus, since he is a member of Christ's mystical body, and how also it is from Christ he receives consolation.

And how these words are verified in him! How great is the part he takes in Christ's sorrows! . . . See the vivid picture the Apostle draws

[64] See the text of the Council of Trent given above, p. 190.
[65] Luc. vi, 40. [66] Matth. xi, 28. [67] Luc. vii, 13.
[68] Hebr. iv, 15 and ii, 16-8; *Debuit fratribus similari* ut *misericors fieret*.
[69] II Cor. i, 5.

of the many difficulties that assailed him during his apostolic journeys when he often saw death near to him: "Five times did I receive forty stripes, save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils from false brethren, in labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, besides those things which are without, my daily instance and solicitude for all the churches. . . ."[70]

What a picture! . . . How the soul of the great Apostle must have been wearied with so many miseries, ever recurring! And yet in all these tribulations, he "exceedingly abounded with joy: "SUPERABUNDO GAUDIO *in omni tribulatione nostra*.[71] What is the secret of this joy? It is the love he bears towards Christ delivered up for him: *Caritas Christi urget nos.* It is through Christ that his consolation abounds: *Ita, et per Christum,* ABUNDAT *consolatio nostra.*[72] Because he is one with Christ through love of Him, he remains unshaken in the midst of all the miseries and hardships to which he is subjected. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? As it is written: For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." But, he adds: "In all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us."[73]

Such is the cry of one who understood the immense love of Christ Crucified, and, as a true disciple, wished to walk in His footsteps even as far as Calvary, by taking, for love of Him, his part in the Divine Master's suffering.[74] For as I have said, it is from Calvary, it is from the Passion of Christ Jesus, that our sufferings, our acts of renunciation and mortification derive all their supernatural value to destroy sin and allow the Divine life to unfold within us. We must unite them in our intention to the Sacrament of Penance, which applies to us the merits of Christ's sufferings that they may make us die to sin. If we do this, the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance will extend, as it were, to every act of the virtue of penance to increase its fruitfulness.

VI

Moreover, that is indeed the intention of the Church. After the

[70] Ibid. [71] Ibid. vii, 4. [72] Ibid, v, 14. [73] Ibid. i, 5.
[74] Rom. viii, 35.

priest, Christ's minister, has imposed the necessary satisfaction, and, by absolution, has washed our souls in the Divine Blood, he repeats these words over us: "May whatever of good thou dost, and evil thou bearest, be to thee for the remission of thy sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of everlasting life."[75] This prayer is not essential to the sacrament, but as it has been ordained by the Church, besides containing teaching that the Church assuredly desires to see us put into practice, it has the value of a sacramental.

By this prayer, the priest gives to our sufferings, to our acts of satisfaction, of expiation, of mortification, of reparation and patience which he thus links and unites with the sacrament, a special efficacy which our faith should not neglect to consider.

"For the remission of thy sins." The Council of Trent teaches on this subject a very consoling truth. It tells us that God is so munificent in His mercy that, not only the works of expiation that the priest imposes on us, or that we ourselves choose, but even all the sufferings inherent to our condition here below, all the temporal adversities which God sends or permits and we patiently support, serve, through Christ's merits, as satisfaction with the Eternal Father.[76] That is why—I cannot too often recommend it to you—it is an excellent and most fruitful practice when we present ourselves to the priest, or rather to Jesus Christ, in order to accuse ourselves of our sins, to accept in expiation all the pains, all the annoyances, all the disappointments which may befall us; and still more, to resolve at this moment on such or such special act of mortification, however slight it may be, which we will accomplish until our next confession.

Fidelity to this practice, which enters so well into the spirit of the Church, is very profitable. To begin with, it removes the danger of routine. A soul that, by faith, thus plunges itself again into the consideration of the greatness of this sacrament in which the Blood of Jesus is applied to us, and with an intention full of love, offers to bear patiently, in union with Christ on the Cross, all that happens that is hard, difficult, painful or disappointing in life, such a soul is impervious to the rust which with many persons accompanies frequent confession. Secondly, this pactice is an act of love extremely pleasing to Our Lord because it is a mark of our willingness to share the sufferings of His

[75] *Quidquid boni feceris et mali sustinueris sit tibi in remissionem peccatorum, augmentum gratiae et praemium vitae aeternae.*

[76] *Docet praeterea sancta synodus tantam esse divinae munificentiae largitatem ut non solum poenis sponte a nobis pro vindicando peccato susceptis, aut sacerdotis arbitrio pro mensura delicti impositis, sed etiam (quod maximum amoris argumentum est) temporalibus flagellis a Deo inflictis et a nobis patienter toleratis, apud Deum Patrem, per Jesum Christum, satisfacere valeamus.* Sess. xiv, cap. 9.

Passion, the most holy of His mysteries. Finally, being frequently renewed, it helps us to acquire little by little that true spirit of penance, so necessary in order to become like to Jesus, our Head and our Model.

After saying: "May whatever good thou dost and evil thou bearest be to thee for the remission of thy sins", the priest adds: "And the increase of grace", *Augmentum gratiae*. I have said that death is here the prelude to life. Our Lord Himself says that the grain of wheat must first die in the ground before it can germinate and bring forth the fruit of the harvest which the householder will gather into his barns.[77] This life will become so much the more fruitful, grace will so much the more abound, in proportion as abnegation has reduced, weakened and diminished the obstacles opposed to its free growth. For, always remember this important truth, holiness is for us of an essentially supernatural order, and God is its source; the more our souls, by means of mortification, free themselves from sin and are detached from self and creatures, the more the Divine action is powerful within us. Christ tells us so; He even tells us that His Father makes use of suffering to render the life of the soul more fruitful: "I am the Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman; you are the branches. Every branch that beareth fruit. My Father will purge that it may bring forth more fruit. In this is My Father glorified, that you bring forth very much fruit." *Omnem palmitem qui fert fructum purgabit eum* UT *fructum plus afferat. In hoc clarificatus est Pater meus* UT *fructum plurimum afferatis.*[78] When the Eternal Father sees that a soul, already united to His Son by grace, resolutely desires to give herself fully to Christ, He wills to make life abound in her and to increase her capacity for receiving it. To do this, He Himself enters into this work of renunciation and detachment, because that is the preliminary condition of our fruitfulness. He prunes away all that could prevent the life of Christ from producing its full effects; all that is an obstacle to the Divine sap. Our corrupt nature contains roots that tend to produce evil fruits; by the repeated and deep sufferings He permits or sends, by humiliations and contradictions, God purifies us, digs and ploughs up the ground of our souls, as it were, detaches us from creatures, and empties us of self that we may produce numerous fruits of life and holiness; *Purgabit eum ut fructum plus afferat.*

Finally, the priest says: *Et praemium vitae aeternae,* "May all these things be to thee for the reward of everlasting life". After having

[77] Joan. xii, 24. [78] Joan. xv, 1-8.

restored order here below so that the life of Christ may grow and increase within us, our sufferings, our acts of expiation, our efforts to do good, assure to our souls a share in heavenly glory. Recall to your minds the conversation of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus on the morrow of the Passion. Dismayed by the death of the Divine Master, which seemingly put an end to their hopes of the reign of the Messias, and being yet ignorant of the resurrection of Jesus, they confide their deep disappointment to one another. Christ comes up to them under the guise of a stranger, and asks them the subject of their discourse. And after having listened to the expression of their disillusionment, *Sperabamus*. "We hoped . . ." 'O foolish and slow of heart to believe!" He immediately says in reproach, "ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory?" *Nonne haec* OPORTUIT *pati Christum*, ET ITA *intrare in gloriam suam?*[79] It is the same for us; we must share in Christ's sufferings if we are to share in His glory.

This glory and beatitude will be immense. "For which cause we faint not", writes St. Paul; "but though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day, for that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." *Id enim quod in praesenti est momentaneum et leve tribulationis nostrae, supra modum in sublimitate aeternum gloriae pondus operatur in nobis.*[80] He writes again: "And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him"; and he adds: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."[81] Therefore in the same measure in which "you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." *Communicantes Christi passionibus, gaudete, ut et in revelatione gloriae ejus gaudeatis exsultantes.*[82]

Courage then! I repeat with St. Paul. "Know you not", he says, in allusion to the public games, the races in the arena, that took place in his time, "know you not that everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things" so as to bear off the prize. And what was the prize? A crown of a day, while it is for an imperishable

[79] Luc. xxiv, 26. St. Paul echoed this saying of the Divine Master when he wrote to the Hebrews (ii, 9): *Videmus Jesum* PROPTER *passionem mortis gloria et honore coronatum*. Cf. Philipp. ii, 7-9.

[80] II Cor. iv, 17. [81] Rom. viii, 17-18. [82] I Petr. iv, 13.

crown that we deny ourselves,[83] and this crown is to share for ever in the glory and beatitude of our Head.

Jesus Christ says: Here below you are in affliction; the world that knows Me not lives in pleasure, while, by a life of faith, you bear with Me the burden of the Cross; but I will see you again at the last day, "and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you" —*Plorabitis et flebitis vos, mundus autem gaudebit; vos autem contristabimini, sed tristitia vestra convertetur in gaudium . . . Iterum videbo vos et gaudebit cor vestrum*—ET GAUDIUM VESTRUM NEMO TOLLET A VOBIS.[84]

[83] I Cor. ix, 24-25. [84] Joan. xvi, 20-22.

B. LIFE FOR GOD

V. THE TRUTH IN CHARITY

SUMMARY. Christianity, the *religion of life.* I. *First character* of our works: *truth*; works *conformable to our nature as reasonable beings*; harmony of grace and nature; works conformable *to our individuality* and *our special vocation.* II. To accomplish our works *in charity*, in a state of grace; *necessity and fruitfulness of grace* for the supernatural life. III. Marvellous *variety of the fruits of grace* in souls; it has, however, only *one source.*

CHRISTIANITY is a mystery of death and life, but it is especially a mystery of life. As you know, death was not included in the Divine plan; it was the sin of man that brought it upon the earth; sin, which is the negation of God, has produced the negation of life, namely, death.[1] If, therefore, Christianity requires renunciation, it is in order to immolate that in us which is contrary to life; we must remove the obstacles that are opposed to the free development within us of the Divine life which Christ brings us: He is the great Author of our holiness, without Him we can do nothing. It is therefore not a question of seeking or practising mortification for itself, but primarily in view of facilitating the development of the Divine germ placed within us at Baptism. St. Paul, in telling the neophyte he must "die to sin", does not include in this single formula all the practice of Christianity: he adds that he must still be "alive unto God, in Christ Jesus". This expression, so rich in meaning, as we shall see in the course of the following conferences, sums up the second operation of the soul.

Like all life, the supernatural life has laws proper to itself, to which it must be subject if it is to be maintained. In the two preceding conferences I have shown you what are the elements of the life for God in Jesus Christ.

It is necessary, first of all, to establish the *fundamental principle*

[1] *Per unum hominem, peccatum in hunc mundum intravit et per peccatum mors, et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit.* Rom. v, 12.

which regulates all Christian activity, and is the condition of its value in God's sight. Let us see now what is this general essential order that should rule the infinite variety of actions of which the ordinary thread of our life is woven.

I

You know this text of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians: *Veritatem facientes in caritate,*[2] "Doing the truth in charity." I would like to dwell upon it with you for a few moments. You will see that in these words the Apostle states the fundamental law that regulates our supernatural activity in the domain of grace.

"Doing the truth in charity" is equal to saying that the supernatural life must be maintained in us by human acts, animated by sanctifying grace and referred to God through charity.

The term *Facientes* indicates the necessity of works. I need not insist much on this point. All life must manifest itself by acts; without works, faith, which is the foundation of the supernatural life, is a dead faith: *Fides, si non habeat opera, mortua est in semetipsa.*[3] It is the Apostle St. James who writes this. And St. Paul, who never wearies of showing the riches we have in Our Lord, does not fear to tell us that Christ is a cause of salvation and eternal life only to those who obey Him: *Factus est omnibus* OBTEMPERANTIBUS SIBI *causa salutis aeternae.*[4] If our desire to be pleasing to God is sincere, let us listen to what Jesus Christ says: "If you love Me, keep My commandments";[5] "for not everyone that saith to Me (with the lips) Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the Will of My Father."[6] Christ wishes to lead us to do this. "Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works."[7]

But what are these works? What nature and character do they bear? *Veritatem facientes,* they must be true works. What does St. Paul mean by this? To speak the truth is to express something that is in accordance with our thoughts. An object is *true* when there is accord between what, by nature, it ought to be and what it is in reality: gold is *true* when it possesses all the properties that we know to belong to the nature of this metal. It is *false* when it has the appearance but not the

[2] Ephes. iv, 15. [3] Jac. ii, 17. [4] Hebr. v, 9. [5] Joan. xiv, 15.
[6] Matth. vii, 21.
[7] *Dedit semetipsum pro nobis ut nos redimeret ab omni iniquitate et mundaret sibi populum acceptabilem, secatorem bonorum operum.* Tit. ii, 14.

properties of gold; there is no accord between what it appears to be and what it ought to be considering the elements that we know constitute its nature. A human action is *true* if it really corresponds to our human nature as creatures endowed with reason, will, and liberty. St. Paul says we must do true works, that is, those that accord with our human nature. Every act that is contrary to our nature as reasonable beings, and that does not correspond to it, is a *false* act. We are not statues, nor machines; neither are we angels. We are men, and the character that ought, first of all, to be manifested in our actions and that God wishes to find in them, is the character of human works done by a free creature.

Consider the universe around you. God finds His glory in all creatures, but only when they are conformed to the laws that rule their nature. The stars of heaven praise God in silence by their harmonious course in incommensurable space: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei;*[8] the waters of the sea praise Him by not overpassing the limits He has assigned to them: *Terminum posuisti quem non transgredientur;*[9] the earth by keeping the laws of its stability: *Fundasti terram, et permanet;*[10] the trees by producing blossoms and fruits after their kind and according to the seasons; the animals by fulfilling the instincts placed in them by their Creator. Special laws rule the existence of each order of beings, and by manifesting God's power and wisdom, frame a song of praise to His glory: *Domine, Dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra!*[11] Lastly, man, whom the Lord has established king of creation, *Omnia subjecisti sub pedibus ejus,* has laws which are the condition of his nature and activity as a reasonable creature. Like all creatures, man was made to glorify God, but he can only glorify Him by acts conformable to his nature. Man thus responds to the ideal God formed when creating him, and thereby glorifies Him and is pleasing to Him.

By nature, man is a reasonable being. He cannot, like an animal destitute of reason, act only by instinct: what distinguishes him from all other beings of the earthly creation is that he is endowed with reason and liberty. Reason must therefore be sovereign in man; but, as a creature, reason must itself be subject to the Divine Will on which it depends, and that is manifested by the natural law, and by positive laws.

To be "true", which is the first condition necessary in order to be

[8] Ps. xviii, 2.

[9] Ibid. ciii, 9. The whole of this psalm, which is a magnificent hymn to the Creator, denotes the different operations peculiar to the three kingdoms, mineral, vegetable, and animal.

[10] Ibid. cxviii, 90. [11] Ibid. viii, 10.

pleasing to God, each human action must be in conformity with our condition as free and reasonable creatures, subject to the Divine Will; otherwise this action does not correspond to our nature, to the properties belonging to it and the laws that govern it: it is false.

Do not forget that the natural law is something essential in the order of religion. God need not have created me; but since I have been created, I am and remain a creature, and the relations resulting from this fact are unchangeable. One cannot, for example, conceive that a man could be created, for whom it would be lawful to blaspheme his Creator.

It is this character of human action, entirely free, but in accord with our nature and the last end of our creation, and consequently morally good, which must be primarily the distinguishing mark of our works in God's sight: *Qui dicit se nosse Deum et mandata ejus non custodit, mendax est et in hoc veritas non est.*[12]

In order to act as Christians, we must first of all act as men. And this is not without importance. Doubtless, a perfect Christian will necessarily fulfil his duties as man, for the law of the Gospel comprises and perfects the natural law. But one meets with Christians, or rather with some calling themselves Christians, and that not only among the simple faithful, but even among religious and priests, who are exact even to scrupulosity as to their self-chosen practices of piety, and yet hold certain precepts of the natural law very cheaply. These people have it at heart not to miss their exercises of devotion, and this is excellent, but, for example, they do not refrain from attacking a neighbour's reputation, from telling falsehoods, and failing to keep their word; they do not scruple to give a wrong meaning to what an author has written nor to infringe the laws of literary or artistic property; they defer, sometimes to the detriment of justice, the payment of their debts, and are not exact in observing the clauses of a contract.

Such as these "whose religion spoils their morality",[13] to use the expression of the great English statesman, Gladstone, have not understood St. Paul's precept: *Veritatem facientes.* There is a want of logic in their spiritual life, there is "untruth". Many of these souls may be unconscious of this "untruth", but it is none the less hurtful,

[12] Joan. ii, 4.

[13] *There is one proposition which the experience of life burns into my soul: it is this, that man should beware of letting his religion spoil his morality. In a thousand ways, some great, some small, but all subtle, we are daily tempted to that great sin.* Sir John Morley, *Life of Gladstone,* ii, 185. We can compare this thought with these words of Bossuet: "One is uneasy if he has not said his rosary or other fixed prayers, or if he has omitted some *Ave Maria* in a decade; I do not blame him; God forbid! I have only praise for religious exactitude in exercises of piety. But who can endure to have this same person easily breaking four or five precepts of the Decalogue daily without

for God does not find in them that order which He wills should reign in all His works.

So then, we must be "true". That is the basis on which grace works. As you know, grace does not destroy nature. Although, by Divine adoption, we have received that which is like a new being, *Nova creatura,* grace (which must become within us the source and principle of new and supernatural operations) presupposes nature and the operations proceeding from it. Far from being opposed to one another, grace and nature, as regards what is good and pure in the latter, are in harmony, each preserving its own character and beauty.

Let us contemplate what took place in Jesus Christ, for we must always regard Him in all things. Is He not the Model of holiness? He is God and man. His state of Son of God is the source whence flows the Divine value of all His acts; but He is also man, *Perfectus homo.* Although united in an ineffable manner to the Divine Person of the Word, His Human Nature in no way lost its own activity, its special manner of acting; this nature was the source of perfectly authentic human actions. Jesus Christ prayed, worked, ate, suffered, slept: those were human actions, which showed that Our Lord was truly man; I dare even say that none has ever been so much man as He, for His human nature was incomparably perfect. Only, in Him, the human nature subsisted in the Divinity.

Something analogous takes place in us: grace does not suppress or reverse nature either in its essence or in its good qualities. Doubtless, it constitutes a new superadded state, infinitely superior to our natural state. A profound modification has been effected in us, both as regards our end which has now become supernatural and the forces which serve to attain it, but our nature is neither troubled nor diminished thereby.[14] It is in exercising our own faculties, intelligence, will, love, sensibility and imagination, that our human nature, even when adorned with grace, must perform its actions: but these acts proceeding from nature, are raised by grace to the point of being worthy of God.

troubling, and treading underfoot the holiest duties of Christianity without scruple? Strange illusion, with which the enemy of the human race beguiles us! He is not able to eradicate from the heart of man the principles of religion which he finds too deeply implanted there, so he substitutes a dangerous amusement instead of its legitimate employment, in order that, deceived by the appearances, *we may believe we have satisfied the serious obligations religion imposes on us by these trifles.* Undeceive yourselves, Christians. . . . In doing works of supererogation, take care not to forget those that are of necessity." *Sermon for the Feast of the Conception of the Virgin,* 1669. *Oratorical Works.*

[14] It goes without saying, that the supernatural state tends to exclude all that is vitiated in nature through original sin: that which is called by ascetical authors the "natural" life, as opposed to the "supernatural" life. We have seen above, how mortification consists precisely in destroying this "natural" life.

We must, first of all, remain ourselves, living in a manner conformable to our nature as free and reasonable creatures: this is the first element of the "truth" of our actions. I will add: we should live in a way *that corresponds to our individuality.*

We must keep our personality in our supernatural life as to what is good in it; that is a part of that "truth", that "sincerity", which the life of grace demands. Holiness is not a single mould where the natural qualities that characterize one's personality have to disappear so that only a uniform type may be represented. Far from that. God in creating us, endowed each of us with gifts, talents, privileges; each soul has its special natural beauty: one shines by depth of intelligence, another is distinguished by strength of will, a third attracts by breadth of charity. Grace respects this beauty as it respects the nature on which it is based; it will but add a supernatural splendour to the natural beauty, enhancing and transfiguring it. In His sanctifying operation, God respects His work of creation, for He has willed this diversity: each soul, in translating one of the Divine thoughts, has a special place in the Heart of God.

Lastly, we must be "true" by being *in accord with the vocation* to which God has called us. We are not only isolated individuals; we form part of a society which includes different states of life. It is clear that in order "to be in truth", we must also practice the duties of the special state in which Providence has placed us; grace cannot be in contradiction to this. The mother of a family would be "untrue" to her state if she were to pass long hours in church when her presence is required at home for the ruling of her household. A religious would be "untrue" to his vocation if he were to spend an hour in private devotions, instead of doing the works prescribed at that hour by obedience, however commonplace this work might be. Such acts are not entirely "true".

"Sanctify them in truth", was the prayer of Jesus for His disciples, at the Last Supper.

II

But if our acts are true and conformed to our condition as reasonable creatures subject to God, freely accomplished and according with our state, is this sufficient to make them acts of supernatural life?

No, this is not enough; it is necessary besides (and this is the capital point) that they should proceed from grace, and be accomplished by a soul adorned with sanctifying grace. That is what St. Paul means by the word: *In caritate.*

"In charity", that is to say, first of all, in fundamental essential charity, which causes us to refer ourselves entirely to God and find in Him the Supreme Good which we prefer to all other good: that is the fruit of grace which makes us pleasing to God to the extent of becoming His children. It is true that supernatural charity is not grace; but charity and grace always go together: *Caritas diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum qui datus est nobis.*[15] Grace elevates our *being;* charity transforms our *activity;* the degree of one marks the degree of the other, and every grave fault, of whatever nature it may be, kills grace and charity in us at one and the same time.

Sanctifying grace should be the source from which our human activity is nourished; without it, we cannot produce any supernatural act having any meritorious proportion to the beatitude of eternal life. God first of all establishes us in a state, the state of grace: this is of primary importance. A being only accomplishes actions by reason of his nature: we only accomplish human actions if we first possess human nature; in the same way, we can only perform the acts of the supernatural life if we first possess, by grace, what is, as it were, a new nature: *Nova creatura.*

Imagine a man lying on the ground before your eyes. He may be only asleep or perhaps he is dead. In the first case he will presently wake and give signs of life; his natural energies will be manifested. Why? Because he still keeps within him the source from whence issue these energies, that is to say, the soul. But if the soul be absent, the body will never move; whatever you may do to it, it will remain in the cold inertness of a corpse. No activity will henceforth arise from this body of death: the vital principle whence its energies were derived has left it.

So it is with the supernatural life. Sanctifying grace is the inward principle whence all supernatural activity emanates. If the soul possesses this grace, it can produce acts of life, supernaturally meritorious: if not, the soul is dead in the sight of God.[16]

Jesus Christ has given a comparison which makes us well able to

[15] Rom. v, 5. "Sanctifying grace and Divine Charity are the outpouring of Christ's Spirit, the Paraclete. For habitual grace and the supernatural spiritual endowment of charity are only distinguishable from one another as the sun's light is distinguished from the sun. Sanctifying grace is the life of the soul; charity is that same living force ready to burst forth into all the operations of the supernatural life, and chiefly into actual love of the Source of all its life and beauty." HEDLEY, *Retreat* pp. 302-303.

[16] Of course, this is only a comparison serving to show us the necesssity of grace as a supernatural vital principle; for the soul in a state of mortal sin can, through the Sacrament of Penance, live again by recovering grace. Moreover the soul ought to prepare itself for the reception of this sacrament by free, supernatural acts, (supernatural because they are accomplished under the impulsion of supernatural *actual* help given by God), acts of fear, hope, charity and contrition. Cf. note p. 207.

understand the function of grace in us. Our Lord loved to make use of images which render the truth easy to grasp. It is after the Last Supper. Our Divine Saviour leaves the Cenacle with His disciples to go to the Mount of the Olives. On the way, outside Jerusalem, He passes over a little hill covered with vineyards. In pointing them out to His Apostles He says: "I am the Vine; you the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me." In the same way as the branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains united to the trunk, so it is with us, if we do not remain united to Christ by grace.

Grace is the sap that rises from the root to the branches. It is not the root or the trunk that bear fruit: it is the branch; but the branch united by the trunk to the root, and drawing from the root the sap that nourishes. Break off the branch, separate it from the trunk, and, no longer receiving the sap, it withers and becomes dead wood, incapable of producing the least fruit.

It is the same with the soul that does not possess grace; it is not united to Christ, it does not draw from Him the sap of sanctifying grace which would make it supernaturally living and fruitful. Do not forget that Christ alone is the source of our spiritual life; all our activity, all our existence have no value for eternal life unless we are united to Christ by grace. If we are not, it is in vain that we exert and spend ourselves, and accomplish the most brilliant actions in the sight of men; in God's sight all this activity is devoid of supernatural profit and without merit for eternal life.

You may say: Are these actions then bad? No, not necessarily. If they are honest, they may yet be pleasing to God, Who sometimes rewards them with temporal favours: they gain a certain merit, in the very wide sense of the word, for the one who accomplishes them, or rather, there is a certain appropriateness that God should not leave them without some recompense. But as sanctifying grace is lacking, there is not the necessary proportion between these actions and the eternal inheritance God has promised only to those who are His children by grace, Si *filii, et heredes,*[17] God cannot recognize in these actions the supernatural character requisite in order that they may count with Him for eternity.

You may see two men giving alms to the poor: the one is, by grace, in the holy friendship of God, he gives alms from a movement of Divine charity; the other is destitute of sanctifying grace: both perform

[17] Rom. viii, 17.

exteriorly the same action, but what a difference in God's sight! The alms of the first gains for him an increase of infinite and eternal happiness; it is of him Our Lord spoke when He said that he who gives a cup of cold water in His Name should not lose his reward.[18] The alms of the second is without merit as regards the eternal beatitude, even if he should lavish handfuls of gold. That which proceeds from nature alone has no value for eternal life. Certainly, God, Who is Goodness itself, will regard graciously the good actions done by the sinner, above all when they are acts of charity towards the neighbour, not done from human ostentation, but from a movement of compassion towards the unfortunate. Often indeed, and this is a great reason for confidence, God's mercy inclines Him to grant graces of conversion to those who do these charitable actions, which, in the end, give back to them the supreme good of the Divine friendship. But it is sanctifying grace alone that gives true meaning and fundamental value to our lives.

This is so true that, when the sinner again enters into a state of grace, those actions which were done without grace still remain valueless from the point of view of supernatural merit, however numerous and excellent they may have been. They are irretrievably lost.

St. Paul has thrown great light on this truth. This is what he says: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."[19] In other words, the most extraordinary gifts, the highest talents, the most generous undertakings, the most splendid actions, the most strenuous efforts, the greatest sufferings, are of no merit for eternal life without charity, that is to say, without that supreme love of the soul for God, considered as He is in Himself, that supernatural love which is born of sanctifying grace, as the flower arises from its stem.

Let us then refer all our life to God, our Last End and Eternal Beatitude: the charity of God that we possess with sanctifying grace must be the mainspring of all our activity. When we possess Divine grace within us, we fulfil the wish of our Lord: we "abide in Him", *Manete in me,* and He "abides in us", *Et ego in vobis;* He abides with the Father and the Holy Spirit: *Ad eum veniemus et mansionem apud eum faciemus.*[20] The Holy Trinity, dwelling truly within us as in a temple, does not remain inactive, but unceasingly sustains us so that

[18] Matth. x, 42. [19] I Cor. xiii, 1-3. [20] Joan. xiv, 23.

our soul may exercise its supernatural activity: *Pater meus usque modo operatur, et ego operor.*[21]

You know that, in the natural order, God, by His Divine action, ever sustains us in life and in the exercise of our acts: that is the "Divine concourse". This Divine concourse exists also in the supernatural order; we can never act supernaturally unless God gives us the grace so to act. This grace, on account of its transitory effect, is called *actual,* in opposition to sanctifying grace, which, being in its nature permanent, is called *habitual* grace. With sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, actual grace makes part of the supernatural order. In the ordinary practice of the supernatural life, actual grace is the Divine concourse applied to the supernatural order. On special occasions, however, resulting from the state of the soul in consequence of original sin, this Divine concourse translates and manifests itself in a special illumination of the intelligence, and greater strength given to the will to enable it to resist a grave temptation or accomplish an arduous task. Without this special help which God grants to prayer, we could not attain the supreme end; we could not, as the Council of Trent says, "persevere in justice".[22]

Such is then, in broad outline, the fundamental law of the practice of our supernatural life. Without changing anything of what is essential to our nature, of what is good in our individuality or requisite for our particular state of life, we must live by the grace of Christ, referring through charity all our activity to the glory of His Father. Grace is grafted on nature and envelops its operations; such is the principal source of that diversity we meet with in the Saints.

III

Moreover, the degree of grace itself varies in souls. It is true that there is only one single Model of holiness as there is only one Source of grace and life: Jesus Christ, Justification and beatitude are specifically, in their basis and substance, the same for all: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," says St Paul.[23]

[21] Ibid. v, 17.

[22] Sess. vi, can. 18; cf. can. 13. It is quite evident, however, that the soul in the state of mortal sin can receive actual supernatural graces which enlighten the intelligence and strengthen the will in the work of its conversion; but in this soul these graces are not linked (as they are in one which possesses sanctifying grace) to that "Divine concourse" of which we are speaking, which maintains sanctifying grace in the souls of the just. The Holy Spirit *moves* the sinner towards conversion, *He does not dwell* in his soul.

[23] Ephes. iv, 5.

But just as all those who possess human nature vary in their qualities, so God freely distributes His supernatural gifts in accordance with the designs of His wisdom: "To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ." *Unicuique nostrum data est gratia secundum mensuram donationis Christi.*[24] In the flock of Christ, each sheep bears its name of grace. Jesus says that the Good Shepherd knows His sheep and calls them by name, *Proprias oves vocat nominatim,*[25] just as the Creator knows the multitude of the stars, and calls them all by their name, for each one has its own form and perfection: *Qui numerat multitudinem stellarum, et omnibus eis nomina vocat.*[26] "Now there are diversities of graces but the same Spirit," says St. Paul, "there are diversities of operations, but the same God Who worketh all in all . . . to one . . . is given the word of wisdom . . . to another, faith . . . to another the grace of healing . . . to another the working of miracles . . . to another, prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits . . . but all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to everyone according as He will."[27]

And each soul corresponds to the Divine idea in a manner proper to itself, each turning to account the talent confided to its liberty and reproducing the features of Christ in itself by a co-operation which has its own special character.

Thus, under the infinitely delicate and varied action of the Holy Spirit, we should aim at representing the Divine Model by our own individual activity, elevated and transformed by grace. Thus is realized that harmonious variety which renders God "wonderful in His Saints". *Mirabilis Deus in sanctus suis.*[28] He finds His glory in them all, but one can say of each of them, with the Church:[29] "There was not any found like to him, who kept the law of the Most High:" *Non est inventus similis illi, qui conservavit legem Excelsi.*[30] The splendour of the sanctity of a St. Francis of Sales is not the same as that of a St. Francis of Assisi; the brightness that adorns the soul of a St. Gertrude or a St. Teresa is quite different from that of a St. Mary Magdalen.

In each of the Saints, the Divine Spirit has respected particular natural characteristics; grace has transfigured these natural characteristics, and added gifts of the supernatural order to them. The soul, guided by what the Church calls: *Digitus Paternae dexterae,*[31] has been responsive to these gifts, and has thus attained to holiness. It will

[24] Ibid. 7. [25] Joan. x, 3.
[26] Ps. cxlvi, 4. Cf Baruch. iii, 34-35. "The stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced. They were called and they said: Here we are; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them."
[27] I Cor. xii, 4-11. [28] Ps. lxvii, 36. [29] Office of Confessors.
[30] Eccli. xliv, 20. [31] Hymn, *Veni Creator*

certainly be a true rapture for us to contemplate in Heaven the marvels which the grace of Christ has caused to rise from so varied a foundation as that of our human nature.

Great as are the Saints, exalted as they are in the state of supernatural union, the first principle of all their holiness is to be found in the grace of Divine adoption. I have already said but now wish to repeat, that all the graces, all the gifts God bestows on us, have their source in that Divine regard of predestination by which we have been called to be children of God through the grace of Jesus Christ. There is the dawning of all God's mercies towards us. All the loving dealings of God with each of us are linked to this grace of adoption which Jesus brought us and which we received at Baptism. Oh, if we but knew the gift of God! *Si scires donum Dei.* If we knew the value of this grace which, without changing our nature, makes us children of God, and makes us live as such while awaiting the eternal inheritance! Without it, as you have seen, the life of the most brilliant and gifted genius is profitless for heavenly beatitude. That is why St. Thomas could say that the perfection that results for a single soul from the gift of grace surpasses all the natural riches of the entire universe.[32] "What doth it profit a man", says Jesus, "if he gain the whole world", if he win its esteem, yet, not possessing grace, be shut out forever from the Kingdom of Heaven?[33] Grace is the principle of our real life, the seed of future glory, the true germ of a blessed eternity.

Hence, we understand what an inestimable jewel is sanctifying grace for a soul. It is a precious pearl, all the beauty of which is due to the Blood of Jesus. We understand why our Divine Saviour pronounced such terrible anathemas against anyone, who by his scandals, drags souls into sin and makes them lose the life of grace. "It were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he be cast into the sea."[34] We also understand why saintly souls, leading a life of labour, prayer and expiation for the conversion of sinners that grace may be restored to them, are so pleasing to Jesus Christ. Our Lord one day showed St. Catherine of Siena a soul for which she had obtained salvation by her prayer and patience. "The beauty of this soul was such," the Saint told Blessed Raymond, her confessor, "that no words could express it." And yet this soul was not yet clad in the glory of the Beatific Vision; it had only the beauty given by the grace of Baptism. "Behold," said Our Lord to the Saint, "it is through

[32] *Bonum gratiae unius majus est quam bonum totius universi.* I-II, q. cxiii, a. 9, ad. 2.

[33] Matth. xvi, 26. [34] Luc. xvii, 2.

thee that I have regained this soul which was already lost." Then He added: "Does it not appear to thee very resplendent and beautiful? Who then, would not accept any pain in order to win so wonderful a creature? . . . If I have shown thee this soul, it is to make thee more ardent to procure the salvation of all, and in order that thou mayest lead others to this work according to the grace that shall be given thee."[35]

Let us then be watchful, jealously to guard Divine grace within us; let us carefully put away all that could weaken it and leave it defenceless against the mortal blows of the enemy: those deliberate resistances to the action of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us and unceasingly wills to direct all our activity towards the glory of God. May our soul be *Radicata in caritate,* as St. Paul says;[36] by possessing in itself this Divine root of sanctifying grace and charity, the fruits it produces will be fruits of life. Let us remain united to Jesus Christ by grace and charity, as the branch to the vine: *Sitis in Christo radicati,* the Apostle again says.[37] Baptism has grafted us on Christ,[38] and henceforth we have the Divine sap of His grace in us. It is thus that we can accomplish all our actions divinely, because their inward principle is Divine.

And when this principle is so powerful that it becomes the only one, and our whole activity springs from it, then we fulfil the words of St. Paul: *Vivo ego, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.*[39] "I live", that is to say, I exercise my human and personal activity; "now, not I, but Christ liveth in me": it is Christ Who lives, because the principle on which all my own activity, all my personal life is based, is the grace of Christ. All comes from Him by grace, all returns to His Father by charity: I live for God in Jesus Christ. *Viventes autem Deo in Christo Jesu.*[40]

[35] *Life of St. Catherine of Siena by* Blessed Raymund of Capua.
[36] Ephes. iii, 17. [37] Col. ii, 7. [38] Rom. xi, 16.
[39] Gal. ii, 20. [40] Rom. vi, 11.

NOTE

Can we know whether we are in a state of grace, in the Divine fellowship? If you mean with an absolute knowledge excluding even the shadow of a doubt, we cannot; but we are able, and even we ought, to hope that we possess grace if we are not conscious of any mortal sin, and if we are sincerely striving to serve God with a steadfast goodwill. This last sign is given by St. Mary Magdelen of Pazzi somewhere in her writings. To generous souls, docile to the inspirations from on high, the Holy Ghost often adds His own testimony: *Ipse Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro quod sumus filii Dei.* There is then a practical certainty which does not exclude fear, but ought to be sufficient to enable us to live with confidence the divine life to which God calls us, and to taste the deep joy arising in the soul from the thought that we are, in Jesus, the object of the Heavenly Father's delight.

VI. OUR SUPERNATURAL GROWTH IN CHRIST

SUMMARY. The supernatural life is subject to a *law of progress*. I. Besides being so by the Sacraments, the supernatural life is perfected *by the exercise of the virtues*. II. The *theological virtues*. Nature of these virtues; how they are *specific of the state of a child of God*. III. Why *pre-eminence* ought to be *given to charity*. IV. Necessity of acquired and infused *moral virtues*. V. They *safeguard charity*, which, in return, governs and crowns them. VI. The tending to perfect charity by *purity of intention*. VII. Charity can envelop *all human actions*; sublimity and simplicity of the Christian life. VIII. The *fruit of charity* and of the virtues ruled by charity: *to make us grow up in Christ* so as to complete His mystical body. IX. Supernatural *progress* can be *continuous* until death: *donec occurramus omnes . . . in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi*.

ALL life tends not only to manifest itself by acts which are proper to it and emanate from its interior principle, but also to grow, to progress, to unfold, to become perfect. The child is not born to remain always a child; the law of his nature is that he should come to the age of manhood.

The supernatural life is no exception to this law. Our Lord could, if He so wished, fix us in an instant, after one act of adherence of our will, in the degree of holiness and of glory that He has destined for our souls, as was done for the angels. He has not so willed. He has established that, although His merits are the cause of all sanctification and His grace the principle of all supernatural life, we should constantly do our part in the work of our perfection and spiritual progress; the time we pass here below in faith is granted us for this end. We ought, as we have seen, to put away all obstacles that are opposed to the Divine life in us and, at the same time, to accomplish the actions destined to develop this life until at the moment of our death it is established in its final term. This is what St. Paul calls "to come to the perfect age of Christ".

The same Apostle is careful to show the necessity of this growth, this progress, and how it should be ordered. After having told us "to do

the truth in charity" he immediately adds: "In all things grow up in Him Who is the Head, even Christ." *Veritatem facientes in caritate, crescamus in illo per omnia qui est caput Christus.*[1]

We have seen in the preceding conferences what St. Paul means by "living in truth and charity"; I have shown how these words contain the *fundamental* principle according to which we must act in order to live supernaturally: namely, to remain united to Christ Jesus by sanctifying grace and, through love, to refer all our human actions to the glory of the Father. Such is the primordial law which governs the Divine life in us.

Let us now see how this life of which we have received the germ in baptism must, as far as it depends on us, develop and expand.

This is an important subject. Look at Christ Jesus. All His life is consecrated to the glory of His Father Whose will He always accomplishes: *Non quaero voluntatem meam, sed ejus qui misit me Patris.*[2] He seeks only that. At the moment of achieving His life here below, He says to His Father that He has fulfilled His mission: "I have glorified thee on the earth": *Ego te clarificavi super terram.*[3] The desire of His Divine Heart is that we too should seek the glory of His Father. And what does that mean for us?

Our Lord tells us: "That we should bear much fruit", that our perfection should not remain mediocre, but that our supernatural life should be intense, *In hoc clarificatus est Pater meus ut fructum* PLURIMUM *afferatis.*[4] Was it not for this moreover that Jesus came, that He shed His Blood and gave us a share in His infinite merits? He came that the Divine life might abound in us to overflowing: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et* ABUNDANTIUS *habeant.*[5] Like the Samaritan woman to whom He had revealed the greatness of the "Divine Gift" let us ask Him to give us "of the living water"; let us ask Him to teach us, through His Church, to what sources we must go in order to find the abundance of these waters; for they make us produce numerous fruits of life and holiness pleasing to His Father; they quench our thirst unceasingly until the day of eternal life.

The sacraments are the principal sources of the Divine life in us. They act in our souls *ex opere operato*, as the sun produces light and heat; it is only necessary there should be no obstacle within us to oppose their operation. The Eucharist is, of all the sacraments, the one that most augments the Divine life within us, because in it we receive Christ in person, we drink at the very fountainhead of the living waters.

[1] Ephes. iv, 15. [2] Joan. v, 30; vi, 38. [3] Ibid. xvii, 4.
[4] Ibid. xv, 8. [5] Ibid. x, 10.

This being such a great Sacrament, I will speak further on in a special conference of the nature and condition of its action within us.

What I wish now to show you are the general laws, besides the reception of the Sacraments, by which we can augment the life of grace within us.

I

This is how the Council of Trent sets forth the doctrine concerning this subject: "Once we are purified and become friends of God and members of His race (by sanctifying grace), we are renewed day by day, as St. Paul says, going on from virtue to virtue . . . we grow through the observance of the commandments of God and of His Church, in the state of justice in which we have been placed by the grace of Jesus Christ; faith co-operates with our good works and so we advance in the grace which renders us just in God's sight. For it is written: Let the just (that is to say, he who, by sanctifying grace, possesses the friendship of God) become ever more just. And again: Progress in the state of justice until death. It is this increase of grace for which the Church asks when she says to God (XIII Sunday after Pentecost): Give unto us an increase of faith, hope and charity."[6]

As you see, the Holy Council indicates good works and the exercise of the virtues, especially of the theological virtues, as the source of our progress and growth in the spiritual life of which grace is the principle.

How is this to be realized? First by good works. I have said that every good work done in a state of grace, under the action of Divine charity, is meritorious: "Every meritorious work is a source of the increase of grace within us": *Quolibet actu meritorio meretur homo augmentum gratiae.*[7] The good actions of a soul in a state of grace are not only the fruits or manifestations of our quality of children of God; they are besides, says the Council of Trent, a cause of the increase of that justification which makes us pleasing to God.[8] In the measure, then, that our good works are multiplied, grace increases, it becomes stronger, more powerful and, with it, so does charity; and with it likewise is increased the future glory which is only the blossoming in heaven of our degree of grace here below.[9] That is why the Holy Council

[6] Sess. vi, cap. 10. [7] St. Thom. I-II, q. cxiv, a. 8.

[8] *Si quis dixerit justitiam acceptum non conservari* atque etiam augeri *coram Deo per bona opera, sed opera ipsa fructas solummodo et signa esse justificationis acceptae, non autem* ipsius augendae causam, *anathema sit.* Sess. vi, can. 24.

[9] *Si quis dixerit . . . ipsum (hominem) justificatum bonis operibus quae ab eo per Dei gratiam et Jesu Christi meritum cujus vivum membrum est, fiunt, non vere mereri augmentum gratiae, vitam aeternam et ipsius vitae aeternae, si tamen in gratia decesserit, consecutionem atque etiam gloriae augmentum, anathema sit.* Concil. Trid. Sess. vi, can. 32.

repeats to us the words of St. Paul: "Be ye steadfast and immoveable: always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord."[10]

But it is chiefly by the exercise of the virtues that the life of grace is increased.

You know that in man, there are, inherent to his nature, certain faculties—intellect, will, sensibility, imagination—which are in us principles of action, powers of operation, which allow us to act fully as men; without these, a man is not perfect in his concrete reality as man.

Something analogous is to be met with in the supernatural life. Sanctifying grace animates our souls, and giving us like a new *being*, *Nova creatura*, makes us children of God. But to this being, God, Who does all things with wisdom and scatters His gifts munificently, has given some faculties, which, proportioned to his new condition, give him the capacity of *acting* according to the supernatural end to be attained, that is to say, as a child of God awaiting the inheritance of Christ in eternal beatitude: these are the infused supernatural virtues.

These faculties are called *virtues* (from the Latin word *virtus* "strength"), because they are the capacities of action, principles of operation and energies that remain in us as stable habits, and, being exercised at the befitting moment, cause us to produce with promptitude, ease and joy, works pleasing to God. As these powers of operation have not their source in us and as they tend to make us act in view of an end that surpasses our requirements and exceeds the strength of our nature, they are called *supernatural*. Finally, the word "infused" indicates that God Himself places them in us directly on the day of our baptism, with sanctifying grace.

By grace, we *are* children of God; by the infused supernatural virtues, we *can act* as children of God, and produce acts worthy of our supernatural end.

We must distinguish between infused virtues and natural virtues. The latter are qualities, "habits", that man, even when he is an unbeliever, acquires and develops in himself by personal effort and repeated acts: such are courage, strength, prudence, justice, gentleness, loyalty, sincerity. These are the natural dispositions we have cultivated and that have arrived by exercise at the state of acquired habits. They perfect and beautify our *natural* being in the intellectual or simply moral domain.[11]

A comparison will make us grasp the nature of natural acquired

[10] Sess. vi, cap. 16. Cf. I Cor. xv, 58. [11] Cf. St. Thom. I-II, q. cx, a. 3.

virtue. You possess the knowledge of several foreign languages; you did not receive this knowledge at birth; you have *acquired* it by exercise and repeated effort; once acquired, it has become in you a state of habit, of power, ready to be used at the least command of the will. When you wish to do so, you speak these languages without any difficulty. It is the same with one who has acquired the art of music; he cannot exercise this art at every moment; but the art remains in him in the state of habit; when the musician so wills, he takes the bow of his violin, or places himself at the keyboard, and plays as easily as others open their eyes, walk, etc. You understand equally that the acquired natural virtues, like every acquired habit, must, so as not to be lost, be kept up and cultivated; and this by the same principle that gave it birth, that is to say by exercise.

The infused supernatural virtues are of another essence. To begin with, they lift us above our nature. Doubtless we exercise them with the faculties with which nature has endowed us (intelligence and will), but these faculties are uplifted, if I may so express it, to the Divine level, so that the acts of these virtues attain the proportion necessary to reach our supernatural end. Then, it is not by personal effort we acquire them; but the germ of these virtues is liberally implanted in us by God with the grace which they accompany: *Simul infunduntur.*

II

What are these virtues? As I have said, they are powers of acting supernaturally, forces that render us capable of living as children of God and arriving at our heavenly beatitude.

The Council of Trent, when speaking of the growth of the Divine life within us, distinguishes first of all faith, hope and charity. These virtues are called *theological,* because they have God immediately for their object;[12] by them, we can know God, hope in Him, love Him in a supernatural manner, worthy of our condition as God's children. These are, properly speaking, virtues of the supernatural order: hence their priority and eminence.

And see how well they correspond to our Divine vocation. What is in fact necessary in order to possess God?

First of all to know Him: in Heaven we shall see Him face to face and therefore "we shall be like to Him"; *Similes ei erimus quia videbimus eum sicuti est*;[13] but here below, we do not see Him; it is through

[12] St. Thom. (I-II, q. lxii, a. 1.) states two reasons for this term "*theological virtues*": these virtues are given by God alone, and Divine Revelation alone makes them known to us.

[13] I Joan. iii, 2.

faith in Him, and in His Son, that we believe in His word, that we know Him. It is knowledge in obscurity. But what He tells us of Himself, of His nature, of His life, of His plan of Redemption through His Son, we know however with certitude; the Word Who is always in the bosom of the Father tells us that which He sees, and we know it because we believe what He tells us: *Deum nemo vidit unquam; Unigenitus Filius qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit.*[14] This knowledge of faith is then a Divine knowledge, and that is why Our Lord said it is a knowledge that gains eternal life. *Haec est vita eterna ut* COGNOSCANT *te solum Deum verum et quem misisti Jesum Christum.*[15]

In this light of faith, we know where our beatitude lies; we know that which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive", that is to say, the beauty and greatness of the glory that "God hath prepared for them that love Him".[16] But this ineffable beatitude is beyond the strength of our nature; can we attain to it? Yes, without any doubt; God even places in our soul this certainty of arriving at this supreme end by His grace, the fruit of the merits of Jesus, and in spite of the obstacles opposed to it. We can say with St. Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ Who according to His great mercy, hath regenerated us (at baptism) unto a lively *hope* . . . unto an inheritance incorruptible . . . reserved in heaven"[17] for us.

Lastly, *charity*, love, achieves the work of bringing us here below nearer to God, whilst we await the possession of Him above: charity completes and perfects faith and hope; it makes us experience a real complacency in God; we prefer God to all things and we try to manifest towards Him this complacency and preference by observing His will. "The companion of faith," says St. Augustine, "is hope; it is necessary because we do not see what we believe; with hope, we are not overcome with faint-heartedness in the waiting; then charity comes and places in our souls the hunger and thirst for God and makes our aspirations soar up to Him."[18] For the Holy Spirit has shed abroad in our hearts the charity whereby we cry to God: Father! Father! It is a supernatural faculty that makes us adhere to God as to the Infinite Goodness we love more than anything besides. *Quis nos separabit a caritate Christi?*[19]

Such are the theological virtues: wonderful principles, marvellous powers for living the Divine life as long as we are here below. To know God such as He is revealed to us by Our Lord; to hope in Him and in that beatitude He promises us because of the merits of His Son

[14] Joan. i, 18. [15] Ibid. xvii, 3. [16] I Cor. ii, 9.
[17] I Petr. i, 3; Cf. II Cor. i, 3. [18] *Sermo* liii. [19] Rom. viii, 35.

Jesus; to love Him in preference to all: we can do nothing better to realize our condition of children of God and tend to the acquisition of that eternal heritage which we are called to share with Christ, become our Elder Brother.

God has liberally placed these powers in us.

But do not let us forget that if they are given to us without our concourse, they are not however maintained nor do they progress without our efforts.

It is of the nature and perfection of a power to accomplish the act correlative to it;[20] a power which would remain inert, for example, an intelligence never producing an act of thought, would never reach the end, and consequently the perfection, due to it. Faculties are only given to us that we may put them into action.

Although they are infused, the theological virtues do not escape this law whereby perfection is brought about; if they are unused, it will be to the great detriment of our supernatural life. It is true that exercise does not give birth to them, otherwise they would not be infused; for the same reason, it is God alone Who augments them in us. Therefore the Holy Council of Trent tells us to beseech God to give us the increase of these virtues.[21] See how in the Gospel the Apostles ask Our Lord to increase their faith.[22] St. Paul writes to the faithful at Rome telling them how he asks God to make hope abound in them,[23] and again he beseeches the Lord to make charity "more and more abound" in the hearts of his dear Philippians.[24]

To prayer, to the reception of the sacraments, exercise must be added. If God is the *efficient* cause of the increase of these virtues, our acts, done in state of grace, are the *meritorious* cause of this increase. By our acts, we merit that God should augment these vital virtues in our souls. Besides, exercise produces in us *the facility* of making the acts of these virtues. And this is a very important point, since these virtues are properly speaking the virtues of our state as children of God.

Let us then often ask our Father in Heaven to increase them in us; let us say to Him especially when we approach the sacraments, in prayer and in temptation: O Lord, I believe in Thee, but increase my faith; Thou art my only hope, but strengthen my confidence; I love Thee above all things, but increase this love so that I may seek for nothing outside Thy holy will! . . .

[20] St. Thom. II-II, q. lvi, a. 2; cf. I-II, q. lv, a. 2.
[21] Sess. x, cap. 10. [22] Luc. xvii, 5. [23] Rom. xv, 13. [24] Philipp. i, 9.

III

We ought especially to exercise *charity*. When we shall have arrived at the ultimate goal of our existence, faith and hope will pass away; faith will give place to vision, and hope to possession; and from this perfect vision, this assured possession, will radiate the love that shall have no end. That is why St. Paul says charity is the greatest of the three theological virtues, it alone remains for ever. *Major autem horum est caritas.*[25]

Charity already holds this place of honour here below, and on this capital truth I wish to dwell with you.

You know that when charity accompanies the exercise of the other virtues, it adds new lustre to them, it confers on them a new efficacy and is the principle of a new merit. You submit to a humiliation and accept it with all your heart, that is an act of the virtue of humility; you freely renounce a permitted pleasure, that is an act of the virtue of temperance; you honour God by singing His praises, that is an act of the virtue of religion. Each of these acts, done by a soul in a state of grace, has it own value, its particular merit, its special splendour. But if each of these acts is, moreover, done with an explicit intention of love of God, this motive colours, if I may so express it, the acts of the other virtues, and without taking from them any of their particular merit, it adds a new one.[26]

What follows from thence? This consequence, which puts into full relief the eminence of charity, that our supernatural life and our holiness grow and progress according to the degree of love with which we perform our acts. Take the accomplishment of any act (provided, of course, that this act be, as we have seen, supernatural and in accordance with the Divine order), take any exercise of piety, justice, religion, humility, obedience or patience, and the more the love of God is perfect, pure, disinterested and intense, that is to say, the more the mainspring of these acts is our love for God, for His interests and glory, the more elevated is the degree of merit of this act; and hence more rapid is the increase of grace and Divine life in us. Listen to St. Francis of Sales, the eminent doctor of the inner life, who has spoken so well on these matters: "If love be ardent, powerful and excellent in a heart, it will the more enrich and perfect all the virtuous works which proceed from it. One may suffer death or fire without having charity, as St. Paul presupposes; with still greater reason, one may suffer while having a

[25] Cor. xiii, 13. [26] S. Thom. II-II, q. xxiii, a. 8.

little charity: now I say, Theotimus, that it may well be that a very little virtue has more value in a soul where holy love reigns ardently, than even martyrdom where this holy love is languid, feeble and dull. . . . Thus the little simplicities, abjections and humiliations under which the saints delighted to hide themselves and shelter their hearts from vain glory, having been done with great excellence in the art and ardour of heavenly love, were found more pleasing before God than the great and illustrious labours of some others which were done with little charity or devotion."[27]

In the same place, St. Francis of Sales sets before us the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And with how much reason!

Contemplate our Divine Saviour for a moment, for instance, in the work-shop at Nazareth. Until the age of thirty, He lived a life of labour and obscurity, so much so that when He began to preach and worked His first miracles, His compatriots were astonished even to being scandalized: *Nonne hic est fabri filius?* Is not this the carpenter's son? . . . Whence therefore doth He all these things?"[28] Indeed, during these years, Our Lord did nothing extraordinary to attract the eyes of the world upon Him: He lived in labour, very simple labour. And yet this labour was infinitely pleasing to His Father. Why was that? For two reasons: First, because He Who laboured was the very Son of God; at each moment of this obscure life, the Father could say: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Secondly, because Our Lord Christ Jesus not only brought to His work great material perfection, but He did all things solely for the glory of His Father: *Non quaero voluntatem meam, sed ejus qui misit me (Patris)*;[29] this was the one motive power of all His actions, of all His life: *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper.*[30] Our Lord did every thing with an incomparable perfection of interior love towards His Father.

Such is the two-fold reason why the works of Jesus, however commonplace they may have appeared outwardly, were so agreeable to God and redeemed the world.

Can we imitate Jesus Christ in this? Yes. What in us corresponds to the hypostatic union which makes Jesus the very Son of God, is the state of grace. This grace makes us children of God: the Father can say in looking upon one who possesses sanctifying grace: *Hic est filius meus meus dilectus.* "This is My beloved child." Our Lord said: *Nonne scriptum est. . . . Ego dixi: Dii estis?* "I said you are gods";[31] although it is true that Christ is not, like us, a son by adoption,

[27] *Treatise on the Love of God.* [28] Matth. xiii, 55. [29] Joan. vi, 38.
[30] Ibid. viii, 29. [31] Ibid. x, 34, and Ps. lxxxi, 6.

but Son by nature. The second reason of the value of our works is, as in Christ, not only the *motive* of charity, but likewise the *inward* perfection of the charity with which we do them, the degree of love that envelops these acts, and, by the very fact, determines our growth in the Divine life.

This is very important if we wish not to be content only with what is strictly required to make our actions meritorious, but to increase the degree of this merit and advance rapidly in union with God. Look around you: you meet with two pious persons, in the state of grace, who lead side by side the same kind of life; both perform outwardly the same material actions, and yet there may be, often even there is, an enormous difference between them in the eyes of God. The one continually goes over the same ground, the other advances with speedy steps in the life of grace, perfection and holiness. Whence comes the difference? From the state of grace? No, since we are supposing these two persons to be in possession of God's friendship. From the special excellence of the actions of one of them? No, since we are also supposing that these material actions are substantially the same. Perhaps from the care with which these actions are materially performed? Again no; for although this exterior perfection certainly matters, yet we are supposing it to be equal in both. Whence then comes the difference? From the inward perfection, the intensity of love, the degree of charity with which each of them performs these actions. The one soul, attentive to God, acts with elevated powerful love; she acts only to please God; she remains interiorly prostrate in the spirit of adoration before the Lord; the root of her activity proceeds only from God; and that is why each of her actions draws her nearer to God; she advances rapidly in divine union. The other accomplishes the same work; but, in this soul, faith is asleep; she does not think of God's interests; her love has little ardour, and is of but a low degree; doubtless her action is not without merit, but the measure of this merit is small and may still further be diminished by dissipation, self-love, vanity and so many other human motive powers that this soul, through negligence or levity, allows to glide into her actions.

That is the secret of the great difference that sometimes in the eyes of God exists between certain souls living side by side and leading an outwardly identical life.[32]

[32] I have said "in the eyes of God", for the human eye cannot always distinguish this difference. It may be that *outwardly* one may be more "correct" and give less occasion for the criticism of men; while with the other, although in reality more advanced in union with God, the outward manifestation of grace is impeded by defects of temperament, independent of the will.

Such is the eminence of the virtue of charity. It is charity that, properly speaking, rules the measure of the Divine life in us.

Let us then be watchful to act in all things only to imitate Our Lord so as to procure the glory of His Father. Let us often ask Jesus Christ, in our intimate intercourse with Him, that all our activity may spring, like His, from love; let us ask Him to give us a share in that love He had for His Father and that made Him do all things perfectly: *Quia diligo Patrem.*[33] Our Divine Saviour cannot fail to hear us.

IV

But you will say, if this be so, is it not sufficient to keep to charity? Does not charity render the other virtues useless? No, it would be a great error to think so. Why? Because charity is a treasure more exposed than the others.

You know that faith and hope are not destroyed in us except by grave sins directly contrary to their object, for example, heresy or despair—while charity is destroyed, like the grace which is its root, by every mortal sin, of whatever nature this sin may be. Every grave sin is a mortal enemy to charity. By grave sin, indeed, the soul turns away completely from God so as to turn towards the creature and this is the contrary of supernatural charity. Supernatural charity is a pearl of great price, an inestimable treasure, but it is exposed to be lost by any grave fault whatsoever. That is why it is necessary to protect it on all sides; and such is the function of the *moral virtues*. These virtues are the safeguards of love; by means of them the soul is kept free from deliberate venial sins and from the grave sins which threaten charity.

I ought here to say a few words about the moral virtues; the scope and character of our conferences do not allow me to make a very extensive explanation; I hope, however, to show sufficiently the necessity of these virtues and the place they hold in our supernatural life.

As the name indicates, the moral virtues are those that regulate our morals, that is to say the actions we must freely accomplish so that our conduct may be in accordance with the Divine law (the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, duties of state), and that thus we may attain our last end. As you see, the immediate object of these virtues is not God in Himself, as with the theological virtues. The moral virtues are very numerous: patience, obedience, humility, self-abnegation, mortification, piety and many others; but all refer to or are

[33] Joan. xiv, 31.

implied by the four great virtues called cardinal[34] (fundamental): prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance. These cardinal virtues are at the same time natural (acquired) and supernatural (infused): the first correspond to the second; there is an acquired temperance and an infused temperance, an acquired fortitude and an infused fortitude, and so with the rest. What is their mutual relation? They have the same field of action, and the concourse of the acquired moral virtues is necessary for the full development of the infused moral virtues. Why is this?

In consequence of original sin, our nature is vitiated; there are within us depraved inclinations resulting from atavism and temperament, as well as from the bad habits we contract, which are so many obstacles to the perfect fulfilment of the Divine will. What is to remove these obstacles? The infused moral virtues that God places in us with grace? No, they have not, of themselves, this privilege. Undoubtedly they are admirable principles of operation; but it is a psychological law that the destruction of vicious habits and the redressing of evil inclinations can only be effaced by the contrary habits, and these good habits themselves only result from the repetition of acts: thence the acquired moral virtues. It is for them to destroy our bad habits and give rise to facility in doing good; this facility is the concourse given by the acquired moral virtues to the infused moral virtues. These latter turn this concourse—very humble, but necessary—to their profit and in return, raise the acts of virtue to the Divine level and bestow on them a meritorious value. Remember this truth: no natural virtue, however powerful it may be, can be raised of itself to a supernatural level: that only belongs to the infused virtues, and this constitutes their superiority and pre-eminence.

An example will make the explanation of this doctrine clearer. In consequence of original sin, we bear in us an inclination towards the pleasures of the senses. A man may, by obeying his natural reason, strive to abstain from the irregularities and abuse of these pleasures; by often repeating acts of temperance, he *acquires* a certain facility, a certain habit which constitutes in this man a strength (*virtus*) of resistance. This acquired facility is of the purely natural order; if this man does not possess sanctifying grace, these acts of temperance are not meritorious for eternal life. But let grace come with the infused virtues. If, in this man, there had not been already, in consequence of the *acquired* moral virtue, a certain facility for temperance, the *infused* moral virtue of temperance would have difficulty in developing itself, on account of the obstacles which result from our evil inclinations and have not been

[34] From the Latin word *cardo*, "pivot, hinge"; these four virtues constitute, as it were, a pivot on which all our moral life rests and is supported.

destroyed by contrary good habits; but finding a certain facility for good, grace utilizes it so as to act with more ease. Then not only does the infused virtue urge this man further and make him rise higher in the degree of the virtue, to the point of causing him to despise even permitted pleasures in order to imitate Jesus Crucified more closely; but grace (without which there is no infused virtue) will also give to the acts of the acquired moral virtue a supernatural and meritorious value which these acts could never attain of themselves.

Where the two virtues (acquired and infused) come in contact, a necessary exchange is established between them: the natural or acquired virtue destroys the obstacle and creates facility for good—the infused or supernatural virtue takes possession of this facility in order to develop itself more freely, and also to raise the value of this good habit, give it additional strength, extend its field of operation, and render it supernaturally worthy of eternal beatitude.

V

A like exchange of services exists between the moral virtues (acquired and infused) and charity. I have said that charity is a treasure liable to be lost by every grievous sin: it is for the moral virtues to protect it. They are love's safeguards. By means of these virtues, the soul avoids mortal sins that threaten the existence of charity and the venial faults that lead to grave sin.

This is above all true of those that are not far advanced in the inner life and whose love has not yet reached that eminent degree which makes it strong and stable. One of these souls receives Our Lord in Communion; this communion is fervent; the soul is, at that moment, full of love. But if during the day, this soul is solicited by a temptation of the senses, it is necessary that the moral virtue of temperance should incline her to resistance; otherwise the soul will consent and love will suffer shipwreck. In the same way, if the soul be tempted to anger, it is necessary that the moral virtue of patience, of meekness, should urge her to accept the humiliation, otherwise she will give way to anger and vengeance at the risk of losing sanctifying grace and, with it, charity.

It is not mortal sin only that is a danger for charity; every venial fault of habit not striven against, as I have said above, becomes a danger, because these faults expose the soul to serious falls. Now to combat these venial faults, deliberate or habitual, we need to exercise the moral virtues which cause us to resist the many solicitations of concupiscence. Our will is weakened in consequence of original sin; it is

of great flexibility and easily inclines towards evil. To make it incline towards good needs strength; this strength is virtue, it is a "habit" that constantly inclines the soul towards good. It is a fact of experience that we act nearly always, if not always, according as our habits incline us; from a habit, especially if not striven against, sparks are continuously thrown out as from a furnace. A soul that has the vice of pride will be constantly committing acts of pride and vanity, unless this vice is combated. It is the same with the virtues; they are habits whence constantly arise the acts corresponding to them. The moral virtues (acquired and infused) serve then principally to remove from the soul all the obstacles that delay our advancement towards God; they help us to use the necessary means to fulfil the divers obligations of the moral life, and thus they safeguard within us the existence of charity. Such is the service that the moral virtues have to render to charity.

In return, charity, about all when it is strong and ardent, crowns, as I have said, the other virtues by giving them a special lustre and adding to them new merit.

The influence of charity goes still further: it may rule the whole of our actions so that in case of need it leads the soul to bring forth, so to speak, the acquired moral virtues; the soul, urged by charity, accomplishes little by little the acts of which the repetition produces the acquired moral virtues. The *motive* then comes from charity; but charity cannot exercise all the acts of every virtue. Each faculty has its own work and special exercise.

This is what happens to souls advanced in the Divine life. In these souls, charity has attained high perfection. It is not only on the lips and in the heart, but manifests itself by works. If we really love God, we shall keep His commandments: *Si diligitis me, mandata mea servate.*[35]

Affective love is necessary for the perfection of charity; we praise, we extol those whom we love, we rejoice in the good qualities they possess. He who loves God takes delight in His infinite perfections and repeats constantly with the Psalmist: "Who is the great God like our God! O Lord, Our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth!"[36] He ardently sings God's glory; praise mounts from his heart to his lips: *Cantare amantis est.*[37] It was because they loved, that St. Francis of Assisi composed his wonderful *Canticles,* and St. Teresa her burning *Exclamations.*

But is that enough? No; to be perfect, love must translate itself by acts; affective love must be prolonged in the effective love that embraces the Divine good-pleasure and yields itself entirely to it; that

[35] Joan. xiv, 15. [36] Ps. lxxvi, 14 and Ps. viii, 2.
[37] St. Augustin. *Sermo* cccxxxvi, c. 1.

is the true mark of love.[38] And when this love is ardent, when it is well anchored in the soul, it then governs all the other virtues and every good work; it acts supremely. Because it is powerful, it ever inclines the will towards good, towards God.[39] It manifests itself by constant fidelity to the divine good-pleasure and to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. It is to these souls full of love, that St. Agustine could say: *Dilige, et quod vis fac,* "Love, and do what thou wilt",[40] because these souls embrace only what pleases God; following the example of Christ Jesus, they can say: *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper,* "I do always that which pleases My Father in Heaven". That is perfection.

VI

Now how is this perfect love to be acquired? How are we to increase it in us so as to live by it? For it contains, when it is true, the germ of every virtue: it sets them all in motion, each of course at the required moment, as a captain does with his soldiers.[41] *Caritas omnia credit, omnia sperat, omnia suffert, omnia sustinet.*[42] Each step taken in love is a step in holiness in union with God. How can we reach this perfection of holiness? How can we keep alive within us the intensity of love?

It is above all by the sacrament of the Eucharist, the sacrament of union, that this love increases; we shall presently see this point in detail; we will here consider the question in the domain of our co-operation, beyond the action of the sacrament.

Charity is maintained and its intensity increased above all by the renewal of the intention in view of which we act. As the Fathers of the Church so truly say, in commenting on the words of Our Lord, the intention is the eye of the soul which directs all one's being towards

[38] "We have two principal exercises of love towards God; the one affective, the other effective. By the first we bear affection to God and to what He loves; by the second we serve God and do what He ordains; the first makes us find our complacency in God, the second makes us pleasing to God." St. Francis of Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God.* Book VI, chap. i.

[39] Cf. St. Francis of Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God.* Book XI, c. 8.

[40] *In Epistol. Joan.* Tract. vii, c. 4.

[41] St. Francis of Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life,* Book III, chap. i. This is what St. Jane de Chantal wrote regarding the Saint: "The Divine Goodness had placed in this holy soul a perfect charity, and, as he says, charity entering a soul lodges there with the whole train of virtues; certainly charity had placed and arranged them in his heart in wonderful order; each held therein the rank and authority belonging to it; one undertook nothing without the other; for he clearly saw what was befitting for each and the degrees of their perfection; and all produced their actions according to the occasions that presented themselves, and in the measure that charity excited him, and that gently and without ostentation."

[42] I Cor. xiii, 8.

God.[43] If this eye is pure, is not obscured by any human, created obstacle, then all the activity of the soul is referred to God.

Is it necessary that this intention of acting for love of God, that is to say to procure His glory by doing His will, should be always actual? No, that is not requisite nor even possible, but experience and the science of the saints have shown how well founded and helpful is the practice of frequently renewing our intention so as to advance, to progress in the love of God and the Divine life.[44] Why is this? Because purity of intention keeps our soul in the presence of God and urges us to seek Him alone in all things; it prevents curiosity, levity, vanity, self-love, pride and ambition from insinuating and diffusing themselves into our actions so as to diminish their merit. A pure intention, frequently renewed, surrenders the soul to God in its being and in its activity: it unceasingly reanimates and maintains in the soul the fire of Divine love; and thus by each good work it causes to be done and referred to God, it increases the life of the soul. "In order to make excellent progress in devotion," says St. Francis of Sales, "we must offer all our actions to God every day; for, by this daily renewing of our oblation, we spread over our actions the vigour and virtue of love by a fresh application of our heart to the procuring of the Divine glory; by the means whereof it is ever made holier. Besides this, let us apply ourselves hundreds of times a day to the Divine love by the practice of ejaculatory prayers, elevations of the heart and spiritual retreats (recollections of the soul), for these holy exercises cast our minds continually into God, bearing with them all our actions. And how could it be, I pray you, that a soul that at every moment throws herself into the arms of the Divine Goodness and incessantly breathes forth words of love whereby to keep always in the bosom of this Heavenly Father, should not be considered as doing all her good actions in God and for God?"[45]

Let us then take care to act habitually for God's glory alone, to please Him and be pleasing to Him; so that, according to Christ's own prayer,

[43] *Oculum hic accipere debemus ipsam intentionem qua facimus quidquid facimus: quae si munda fuerit et recta et illud aspiciens quod aspiciendum est, omnia bona opera nostra, quae secundum eam operamur, necesse est bona sint.* St. Augustine. Lib. II. *in posterior. partem sermonis Domini in monte,* c. xiii, n. 45. *Quid enim per oculum exprimitur nisi opus suum praeveniens eordis intentio? Quae priusquam se in actione exerceat, hoc jam quod appetit contemplatur. Et quid appellatione corporis designatur, nisi unaquaeque actio, quae intentionem suam quasi intuentem oculum sequitur? Lucerna itaque corporis est oculus quia per bonae intentionis radium, merita illustrantur actionis.* St. Gregor. *Moralia,* Lib. XXVIII, c. xi, n. 30. Cf. Ven. Beda, *In Lucae Evang. Expostio,* Lib. IV, c. xi. St. Thom. I-II, q. xii, a. 1 ad. 1 and 2.

[44] We are not here speaking of what is strictly requisite to make an act meritorious, but of the growth of perfection. "Our intentions", Bossuet somewhere says, "are subject naturally to fall away, if we do not revive them." Practically, the intention is renewed by a sign of the cross, an ejaculatory prayer, an aspiration of the heart towards God.

[45] *Treatise on the Love of God.* Book XII, chap. ix.

the name of our Father in Heaven may be hallowed, His Kingdom come in hearts and His will be done. A soul thus turned towards God is one taken possession of by love and that ever more and more, for, at each step, she advances more deeply in Divine love by constantly renewing these acts of love. Love then becomes a weight that draws the soul, with ever increasing power, to generosity and fidelity in God's service: *Amor meus, pondus meum.*[46] Hence comes this promptitude of the soul to devote herself to the service of God, to seek the interests of His glory; that is true devotion. What is the meaning of the word *devotion*? The Latin word *devovere* indicates it: it is to be consecrated, vowed to God's service and to accomplish it with ease; devotion is not only to have been consecrated to Christ in baptism, but it is to devote all our energies and works with ease and promptitude to His service and the glory of His Father.[47]

That is what the Church frequently asks for us: "Grant us, O Lord, ever to have a will devoted to Thee, and to serve Thy Majesty with a sincere heart": *Fac nos tibi semper et devotam gerere voluntatem et majestati tuae sincero corde servire.*[48] Elsewhere the Church makes us ask to be devoted in good works to the glory of God's name: *In bonis actibus nomini tuo sit devota.*[49]

To have no other principle than grace in the exercise of our activity, no other end than the accomplishment of the will of God Who has made us His children, no other supreme spring of action than the love of God and the interests of His glory—that is, as St. Paul says, to "walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing to Him; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God": *Ambuletis digne Deo per omnia placentes; in omni opere bono fructificantes et crescentes in scientia Dei.*[50]

May this ideal be ours; then we shall fulfil the precept Jesus gave us, that precept which is the greatest of all and sums up all, namely, to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind and our whole strength.[51]

VII

St. Paul has just told us that, in order to fulfil this precept, we must be pleasing to God in all things: *Per omnia placentes.* He uses the

[46] St. Augustine, *Confess.* Book. XIII, chap IX.
[47] *Devotio est quidam voluntatis actus ad hoc quod homo prompte se tradat ad divinum obsequium.* St. Thom. II-II, q. lxxxii, a. 3.
[48] Collect for the Sunday in the octave of the Ascension.
[49] Collect for the 21st Sunday after Pentecost.
[50] Col. I, 10. [51] Marc. xii, 30.

same expression when he speaks of the increase of the Divine life within us: *Crescamus* PER OMNIA. This term occurs more than once under the Apostle's pen, and it is full of meaning. What does St. Paul mean by this: "in all things to grow up in Him?"—He means that no action, so long as it be "true" in the sense we have spoken of, is excluded from the domain of grace, of charity, of merit; that there is none but may serve to the increase of the life of God within us. St. Paul has himself detailed this word *per omnia,* in his first epistle to the Corinthians. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God";[52] and to the Colossians: "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."[53]

As you see, it is not only the actions which, of their nature, refer directly to God, such as the "exercises" of piety, assistance at Holy Mass, Communion and the reception of the other sacraments, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; but also the most commonplace actions, the most ordinary incidents of our daily life, such as taking food, attending to our business or work, fulfilling our social duties, taking rest or recreation;—all those actions that occur every day and literally weave, in their monotonous and successive routine, the thread of our entire life, can be transformed, by grace and love, into acts very pleasing to God and rich in merit. To use another simile, each is like the grain of incense which seems nothing in itself but, when thrown into the fire, becomes a fragrant perfume. When grace and love take hold of everything in our life, then all our existence is like a perpetual hymn to the glory of the Heavenly Father; it becomes for Him, through our union with Christ, like a censer from whence arise perfumes that rejoice Him: *Christi bonus odor sumus* DEO.[54] Each act of virtue gives immense joy to the Heart of God because it is a flower and fruit of grace, and because grace has been acquired for us by the merits of Jesus: *In laudem gloriae gratiae suae.*[55]

No good action then is excepted, no effort, toil, good work, renunciation, suffering, pain, or tear but, if we will to have it so, comes under the salutary influence of grace and charity. How simple and sublime is the Christian life! Sublime, because it is the very life of God, come forth from God, come into us through the grace of Christ and leading

[52] I Cor. x, 31. [53] Col. iii, 17. [54] II Cor. ii, 15.

[55] Ephes. i, 6. "Those little daily acts of love, or this headache, toothache, this fever, this breakage of a glass, this slight or mark of contempt, in brief, all these little sufferings, being taken or accepted lovingly, are extremely pleasing to the Divine Goodness Who, for a single cup of water, has promised a sea of bliss to all His faithful. . . . Great opportunities of serving God rarely offer themselves, but the little ones are always occurring . . . let us then do all things in the name of God, and all will be well done." St. Francis of Sales. *Introduction to the Devout Life.* Part Third. chap. xxxv.

to God: *Agnosce, O Christiane, dignitatem tuam.*[56] Simple, because this Divine life is engrafted on the human life, however lowly, humble, infirm, poor and ordinary this human life may be of itself. To become His children and the co-heirs of His Son, God does not ask us to perform many heroic acts; He does not ask us to "go up to heaven nor cross the sea."[57] No, the kingdom of God is within us; within us it is built, beautified and perfected: *Regnum Dei intra vos est;*[58] the supernatural life is an inner life of which the principle is hidden with Christ in God and in the soul: *Vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo.*[59]

We have not to change our nature but to repair what is defective in it; we have not to use long formulas: a single glance of the heart can contain an intensity of love. It suffices for us to remain in sanctifying grace; to refer all to God and to His glory by a pure intention, and thus to live our human lives in the place assigned to us by Providence, in accomplishing the Divine Will, in fulfilling the duty of the present moment; and that simply and peacefully, not feverishly and restlessly, but with that inward and deep confidence—composed of liberty of soul and interior joy—of a child who knows himself to be loved by his Father and returns this love according to the measure of his weakness.

This life, animated by grace and filled with love, does not always appear to the eyes of the world; undoubtedly, Our Lord says,[60] that every tree is known by its fruits; the Holy Spirit Who dwells in the soul makes it produce fruits of charity and benignity that outwardly manifest the power of His action; but the principle of this action is altogether hidden, its substantial splendour altogether interior: *Omnis gloria filiae regis ab intus,*[61] its supernatural beauty is often veiled beneath the common appearances of everyday life.

How careless we should be if we often neglected to profit by so many treasures put every day within our reach, by attaching ourselves to "bewitching vanities": *Fascinatio nugacitatis!*[62] What should we say of poor people to whom a great prince was to open his treasury and who, instead of drawing freely from it and so enriching themselves, would be indifferent to these riches and pass them by? We should say they were senseless. Do not let us be such as these. As I have said, of ourselves, we can do nothing; Our Lord wishes us never to forget this: *Sine me nihil potestis facere,*[63] but when we possess His grace within us, it becomes with love, the principle of a life altogether divine.

[56] St. Leo, *Sermo. I. de Nativitate Domini.*
[57] Deuter. xxx, 12-13.
[58] Luc. xvii. 21.
[59] Col. iii, 3.
[60] Matth. xii, 33.
[61] Ps. xliv, 14.
[62] Sap. iv, 12.
[63] Joan xv, 5.

With the grace of Christ, we must do everything to please His Father. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "in Him Who strengtheneth me," *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat;*[64] let all our actions, the least as well as the greatest, the most obscure as well as the most brilliant, serve to make us advance with great strides in the Divine way, by reason of the intense love with which we do these actions. Then God will look upon us with complacency, because He will find reflected in us the image of His Son, an image ever becoming more and more perfect. With the growth of grace, of charity and the other virtues, the features of Christ will be more faithfully reproduced in us to God's glory and the joy of our souls.

VIII

In order that we may become more conformable to Jesus Christ we must live in all things by charity: *Crescamus per omnia* IN ILLO QUI EST CAPUT CHRISTUS. The end of all development in the supernatural life is, for each one of us, to attain "unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ".

I said, when speaking of the Church, that Christ, in His personal and physical reality, is perfect, but He forms, with His Church, a mystical body which has not yet reached its complete perfection. This perfection is attained gradually in the course of the centuries by the sanctification of souls, "according to the measure of the giving of Christ".[65] In a body there are many members and all have not the same function and the same nobility. This mystical body makes only one with Jesus Christ, Who is its Head; through grace we make part of this body; but we must become perfect members, worthy of the Divine Head; that is what we must have in view in our supernatural progress.

And because He is the Head, Christ is the first source of this progress. Never forget this: Jesus Christ, having taken our nature, has sanctified all our actions, all our feelings: His human life was like to ours, and His Divine Heart is the centre of every virtue. Jesus Christ exercised every form of human activity; we must not think of Our Lord as living rapt in ecstasy; on the contrary, He found the motive power of His activity in the Beatific Vision of the perfections of His Father; He willed to glorify His Father by sanctifying in His Person the forms of activity we ourselves have to exert. We pray: He passed the nights in prayer; we work: He toiled in a work-shop till the age of thirty; we eat: He sat at table with His disciples; we suffer contradictions on

[64] Philipp. iv, 13. [65] Ephes. iv, 7.

the part of men: He has known them; did the Pharisees ever leave Him in peace? We suffer: He has shed tears. He suffered for us, before us, both in His body and soul, as none other has ever suffered. We experience joy: His holy soul felt ineffable joy; we take rest: sleep has likewise closed His eyelids. In a word, He has done all we do. And why has He done all this? Not only to set us the example, since He is our Head; but also by all these actions, to merit for us the power of sanctifying all *our* acts: to give us that grace which renders our actions pleasing to His Father. This grace unites us to Him, makes us members of His body; and in order to grow up in Him, to attain our perfection as His members, we have but to let this grace take possession, not only of our being, but of all our activities.

Christ dwells in us with all His merits, so as to vivify all our actions; when, therefore, by an upright and pure intention, often renewed, we unite all the actions of our day to the same human actions that Jesus acomplished here below, the Divine virtue of His grace exercises a constant influence over us. If we do everything united to Him by love, it is certain we shall advance very quickly. Listen to this magnificent text of Our Lord: *Pater non reliquit me solum, quia quae placita sunt ei facio semper.* "My Father is with Me, and hath not left Me alone, for I do always the things that please Him."[66] Each one of us ought to do the same. O Heavenly Father, it is solely to please Thee, for Thy glory and that of Thy Son that I do this action. Christ Jesus, it is in union with Thee I wish to accomplish this act so that Thou mayest sanctify it by Thy infinite merits!

The love for His Father that filled the Heart of Christ ought to become the motive power of the action of His members as it was of His own action. The glory of His Father was the constant thought of Christ in all His works; may it also be ours through our continual union with the grace and charity of Christ! That is why Holy Church makes us ask God to render our actions conformable to His good pleasure; by remaining united to "the Son of His love," we shall deserve to abound in good works.[67] "Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us," says St. Paul;[68] and then you will be fully in accord with your Head: *Hoc enim sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu.*[69] Thence we shall go on from virtue to virtue: *I bunt de virtute in virtutem.*[70] By this, we shall tend towards the perfection of our Model by uninterrupted growth, for Christ dwells in us with His Father Who

[66] Joan viii, 29.

[67] *Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, dirige actus nostros in beneplacito tuo, ut in nomine dilecti Filii tui mereamur bonis operibus abundare.* Prayer for the Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity.

[68] Ephes. v, 2. [69] Philipp. ii, 5. [70] Ps. lxxxiii, 8.

loves us; *Pater diliget eum;*[71] with the Holy Spirit Who guides us by His inspirations; that is the source of progress unceasing and fruitful for heaven. We shall thus attain that solid perfection which is born of the fulness of works entirely conformed to the Divine Will. *Ut stetis* PERFECTI *et* PLENI *in* OMNI *voluntate Dei.*[72]

IX

As long as we are here below we can always grow in grace. The river of Divine life began to flow in us on the day of Baptism, but it can ever go on increasing for the joy of our soul which it waters and fertilizes, until this river flows into the Divine ocean; *Fluminis impetus laetificat civitatem Dei.*[73]

Do not say that this is a mercenary thought. Certainly, it is to our interest to make the Divine life increase within us, for the more we advance in grace and charity, the more our merits increase and the greater will be our future glory and eternal beatitude. But God Himself in the magnificence of His generosity has willed it to be so; if it concerns our joy throughout eternity, it also concerns the Will of God and the glory that the accomplishment of this Will procures for our Heavenly Father.[74]

St. Paul is an admirable model in this. He has reached the end of his career; he has only a short time to live, for he awaits death in the Roman prison; he has preached Christ with unwearying perserverance and sought to reproduce in himself the Divine features of Christ he so much loves. And this is what he writes to his beloved Christians of Philippi, after so many labours undertaken for Jesus, after so many struggles undergone for His glory, and tribulations borne with that ardent love that nothing could diminish: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus . . . I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus."[75] Why does St. Paul press towards the mark with all the energy of his great soul? Doubtless to win the prize, but it is "the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ

[71] Joan. xiv, 23. [72] Col. iv, 12. [73] Ps. xlv, 5.

[74] "A soul that loves God ought to wish sincerely to unite within herself all the perfections in which God takes delight and to possess them in the degree conformable to His Will." St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi. *Life* by P. Cepari.

[75] Philipp. iii, 12-14.

Jesus". It is to the glory of the Eternal Father that we bear much fruit; Our Lord Himself has assured us of this; it is that the Divine life may abound in us that God has given us His Son, and that His Son has given us the Church, His Spirit, and all His merits.

That is why St. Paul so much exhorted the Christians of his time to progress in the Christian life: "As therefore ye have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and confirmed in the faith as also you have learned, abounding in Him in thanksgiving."[76] Again from his prison he wrote to the Philippians: "And this I pray that your charity may more and more abound . . . that you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice, through Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."[77] And yet more insistently: "May the Lord . . . confirm your hearts without blame in holiness, before God and our Father, at the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ with all His Saints . . . brethren, we pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus; that as you have received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more. For you know what precepts I have given to you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the Will of God, your sanctification." *Haec est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.*[78]

Let us then seek to realize this Will of our Heavenly Father. Our Lord demands that the brightness of our works be such that it leads those who behold it to glorify His Father.[79] Do not let us fear temptation: God makes it profitable for us when we resist it. *Cum tentatione proventum,*[80] because it is the occasion of a victory that strengthens us in the love of God; neither let us fear trials: we may pass through great difficulties, undergo serious contradictions, endure deep sufferings, but from the moment we begin to serve God through love, these difficulties, these contradictions and sufferings serve to nourish love. When we love God, we may still feel the cross; God even makes us feel it the more in the measure we advance, because the cross establishes in us a greater likeness to Christ; but we then love, if not the cross itself, at least the hand of Jesus Who lays it on our shoulders; for this hand gives us also the unction of grace wherewith to bear this burden; love is a powerful arm against temptations and an invincible strength in adversities. Neither let us be cast down by our miseries, by the imperfections we deplore. They do not prevent the growth of grace, for God knows our frame and that we are dust: *Cognovit figmentum nostrum;*[81] they

[76] Col. ii, 6-7. [77] Philipp. i, 9-11. [78] I Thess. iii, 13; iv, 1-3.
[79] *Luceat lux vestra coram hominibus ut videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in coelis est.* Matth. v, 16.
[80] I Cor. x, 13. [81] Ps. cii, 14.

are the consequences of our fallen nature and the fruitful root of humility. Let us have patience with ourselves in this striving after perfection, however prolonged it may be. True Christian life is not restless or unquiet; its development is perfectly compatible with our miseries, our limitations, our weaknesses; for it is in the midst of these weaknesses we feel the triumphant strength of Christ dwelling within us: *Ut inhabitet in me virtus Christi.*[82]

God, in fact, is the first and principal author of our sanctification, as of our salvation.[83] Never let us forget that. "Do not let us glory," says the Council of Trent, "as if we did everything ourselves; but God is so rich in mercy that He wills to recompense the gifts He Himself places in us."[84]

"By the grace of God I am what I am," says St. Paul. *Gratia Dei sum id quod sum,* and he adds: *Et gratia ejus in me vacua non fuit:*[85] "and His grace in me hath not been void, but I have laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I but the grace of God with me." In order that God may give the increase, he says again, it is necessary to plant and water: *Ego plantavi . . . Deus autem incrementum dedit.*[86]

With all the energy of our being, by the meritorious practice of the virtues, above all, the theological virtues, and by the essential disposition of doing all for the glory of the Heavenly Father, let us aim at leaving the greatest freedom possible to the development within us of the action of God and of the Holy Spirit. It is by this "we shall grow up in Christ Who is our Head"; to this we have been called by Christ Jesus: *In quo et comprehensus sum a Christo Jesu.*[87] To stand still on the road of sanctification is to recede. On the other hand we can always advance as long as we are here below, as Our Lord Himself said: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, whilst it is day; the night cometh when no man can work."[88] Only death puts an end to those ascensions of the heart that are attained in this valley of tears.[89] Grant that we may then have arrived at the age of the perfection of Christ, to that fulness of life and beatitude God has willed for each one of us in

[82] II Cor. xii, 9.

[83] St. Paul writes: "May the God of Peace . . . fit you in all goodness, that you may do His Will: doing in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ: to Whom is glory for ever and ever." Hebr. xiii, 20-21.

[84] *Absit ut Christianus homo in seipso vel confidat vel glorietur et non in Domino; cujus tanta est erga homines bonitas ut* EORUM *velit esse* MERITA *quae sunt* IPSIUS DONA. Sess. vi, cap. 16. This is what the prayer after the 12th Prophecy on Holy Saturday expresses so well. *Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, spes unica mundi . . . auge populi tui vota placatus, quia in nullo fidelium, nisi ex tua inspiratione, proveniunt quarumlibet incrementa virtutum.*

[85] I Cor. xv, 10.

[86] Ibid. iii, 6.

[87] Philipp. iii, 12.

[88] Joan. ix, 4-5.

[89] Ps. lxxxiii, 6-7.

predestinating us in His beloved Son. *Donec occurramus omnes . . . in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi.*[90]

[90] Ephes. iv, 13.

NOTE

(The numbers placed in parentheses indicate the pages of the present volume in which the different points raised in this note are to be found exposed more in detail.)

We think it useful to end this conference with a rapid glance at the supernatural organism taken as a whole; this wide synthetic view will serve to mark the order of the different elements that constitute the life of the child of God. With this aim in view, we cannot do better than contemplate for a few seconds the Person of Our Lord, since He is our Model.

In virtue of the grace of the Hypostatic Union, Jesus Christ is by nature, God's own son (pp. 50 and 111-112); we become children of God by the grace of adoption (pp. 31-32). In Christ, sanctifying grace exists in its fulness (pp. 111-112); we share in this fulness in a more or less abundant measure, according to the gift Christ makes of it to us: *Secundum mensurum donationis Christi* (pp. 35-36). Sanctifying grace brings in its train the infused theological and moral virtues. Our Lord had not, properly speaking, faith. He had hope up to a certain point; He carried charity to its highest degree (p. 52); there remains in us, as long as we are here below, faith, hope, and charity in a greater or lesser degree (pp. 220-221). Jesus Christ possessed the infused cardinal virtues and the other moral virtues compatible with His Divinity (p. 53); but in Him they developed freely, unimpeded and without effort, because Our Lord, having a perfect human nature, exempt from sin and the consequences of sin, these virtues met with no obstacle in their exercise; in us, as a result of the consequences of original sin, the development of the infused moral virtues is hindered and requires the concourse of the acquired moral virtues (227). Lastly, the Holy Spirit poured out in the soul of Jesus the fulness of His gifts (pp. 113-114); He makes us participate in them, and this participation, although limited, produces wonderful fruits (pp. 117-124). Let us add that the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit raise us to a special plane, which does not necessitate the direct aid of the natural virtues (pp. 117-118 and 219-220); while the infused moral virtues require for their full development, the concourse of the corresponding natural moral virtues, a concourse which they raise whilst utilizing it. Charity, alone, supernaturally quickens the other virtues; that is why charity has the priority.

Such is, in a few lines, the wonderful supernatural organism that God's infinite goodness has established to make us holy.

VII. THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

SUMMARY. The Eucharist, source of Divine life. I. The Eucharist considered as *sacrifice;* transcendency of *Christ's priesthood.* II. Nature of sacrifice; how *the ancient sacrifices* were only *figures*; the immolation of Calvary, the *only reality*; the *infinite value* of this oblation. III. It is *reproduced and renewed* by the sacrifice of *the Mass.* IV. Inexhaustible *fruits* of the sacrifice of the altar: *homage* of *perfect adoration*; sacrifice of *full propitiation*: the only *thanksgiving* worthy of God; sacrifice of *powerful impetration.* V. Intimate *participation* in the oblation of the altar *through the identification* of ourselves *with Christ High Priest and Victim.*

IN all the preceeding pages, I have tried to show you how God wills to give us a share in His life, how the grace of Christ, making us children of God, is the principle of Divine life in us. Baptism has given us this grace: it is the supernatural life at its dawn, it is the Divine river at its source. There are obstacles opposed to the attainment of the fulness of this life, to the widening of this river; I have said how these obstacles must be overcome. In the two last conferences, I have pointed out what are the general laws which govern the maintenance of this life in our souls and the measure of its growth: namely to remain united to Christ by sanctifying grace, and to refer each of our actions to the glory of His Father with a pure intention and an intense movement of charity. This law extends to all our activity, it embraces all our works of whatsoever nature they may be.

When a soul has understood the greatness of this life, when it has grasped that its principle is union with Christ by faith and love, it aspires to the perfection of this union; it seeks the fulness of this life which is to be its own according to the eternal designs. Perhaps we ask ourselves if such intimate union is not only a dream. No, sublime as it is, it is not a dream; it can and ought to become a reality. What seems impossible to men is easy to God: *Apud homines hoc impossibile est, apud Deum autem omnia sunt possibilia.*[1]

It is true that all the efforts of human nature, left to itself, apart from Christ, cannot advance us a step in the attainment of this union, nor in the birth and development of the life which is the fruit of this union.

[1] Matth. xix, 26.

It is God alone Who gives the seed and the increase. We tend the plant, we water it: that is necessary, it is indispensable, says St. Paul;[2] but the fruits of life are only produced because God makes the sap of His grace to spring up within us.

God gives us incomparable means of maintaining this sap in us. For if He is the infinite and sovereignly efficacious Goodness Who wills to make us partakers of His nature and beatitude, our God is also eternal Wisdom Who proportions the means to the end with a strength only equalled by the sweetness with which it acts: *Attingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter.*[3]

No if after having seen how God gives us in baptism the germ of this life and the first fruits of this union, after having seen to what general law their growth is subject, we wish to know the special means God gives us, we shall see they are principally to be found in prayer and the reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

God has made an engagement with the soul that approaches Him: "If you ask the Father anything in My name," Jesus says, "He will give it you." Therefore He adds: "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." This joy is the joy of Christ, *Ut habeant gaudium meum impletum in semetipsis,*[4] the joy of His grace, the joy of His life which, like a Divine river, flows from Him into us to make us glad: *Fluminis impetus laetificat civitatem Dei.*[5]

The Eucharist is another and more powerful means. God communicates His gifts in answer to prayer, under certain conditions. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, it is God, it is Christ who gives Himself to us. The Eucharist is, properly speaking, the sacrament of union which nourishes and maintains the Divine life in us. To it Christ's words especially apply when He says that He has come to give abundance of life to souls: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*[6] In receiving Christ in Communion, we unite ourselves to very Life.

But before giving Himself as food for the soul, Christ is first immolated. He only renders Himself present under the sacramental species in the sacrifice of the Mass. That is why I must first speak to you of the oblation of the altar, waiting till the next conference to speak of Eucharistic Communion.

Let us then say what the Sacrifice of the Mass is, and what power it contains for the transformation of our souls into Jesus.

[2] I Cor. iii, 6. [3] Sap. viii, 1. [4] Joan. xvi, 23-24.
[5] Ps. xlv, 5. [6] Joan. x, 10.

This is an ineffable subject. Even the priest, who makes the Eucharistic Sacrifice the centre and sun of his life, is powerless to put into words the marvels that the love of Christ Jesus has there gathered up. All that man, a mere creature, can say of this mystery come forth from the Heart of a God, remains so far beneath the reality that, when we have said all that we know of it, it is as if we had said nothing. There is no subject the priest loves more and at the same time dreads more to speak of, so high and holy is this mystery.

Let us ask faith to enlighten us. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is pre-eminently a mystery of faith, *Mysterium fidei;* in order to understand something of it we must go to Christ, repeating to Him words like those of St. Peter when Jesus announced this mystery to the Jews, and when even several of His disciples left Him, being scandalized: To whom shall we go, O Divine Master? Thou alone hast the words that lead to eternal life: *Ad quem ibimus? Verba vitae aeternae habes.*[7] And above all let us believe, as St. John says, in love. *Et nos credidimus caritati.*[8] Our Lord willed to institute this Sacrament at the moment when, by His Passion, He was about to give us the greatest testimony of His love for us, and He has willed that it should be perpetuated among us "in commemoration of Him". It is like His last thought for us and the testament of His Sacred Heart: *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.*[9]

I

As you know, the Council of Trent has defined that the Mass is "a true sacrifice", which "recalls and renews Christ's immolation on Calvary. The Mass is offered as a true sacrifice, properly so called."[10] In "this Divine Sacrifice which is accomplished at the Mass is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner the same Christ Who upon the altar of the cross was offered in a bloody manner. There is only one victim; and the same Christ Who was offered upon the Cross offers Himself now by the ministry of priests; the difference only exists in the manner of the offering":[11] *Sola offerendi ratione diversa.* If then we would understand the greatness of the sacrifice offered on the altar, we must consider for an instant what it is that makes the value of the immolation of the Cross. This value is derived from the dignity of the priest and of the victim. Let us then say a word on the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Christ.

[7] Joan. vi, 69. [8] I Joan. iv, 16. [9] I Cor. xi, 24.
[10] Sess. xxii, can. 1. [11] Sess. xxii. cap. 2.

Every true sacrifice supposes a priesthood, that is to say the institution of a minister charged to offer it in the name of all. Under the Jewish law, the priest was chosen by God from the tribe of Aaron and consecrated to the service of the Temple by a special anointing. But Christ's Priesthood is transcendent; the anointing which consecrates Him is altogether unique: it is that grace of union which, at the moment of the Incarnation, united to the Person of the Word the humanity He has chosen. The Incarnate Word is "the Christ" which signifies "the Anointed", not anointed with an outward unction such as that which served to consecrate the kings, prophets and priests of the Old Testament, but with the Divinity out-poured on His Humanity like a delightful oil: *Unxit te Deus, Deus tuus, oleo laetitiae prae consortibus tuis.*[12] It is by the grace that makes Him the Man-God, Son of God, and at the very moment of this union, that Jesus is "anointed", consecrated and constituted priest and pontiff, that is to say, mediator between God and men; and it is His Father Who thus ordains Him supreme High Priest. Hear what St. Paul says: "Christ did not glorify Himself that He might be made a high priest: but He that said unto Him (on the day of the Incarnation): Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." He Who called and established Him "priest of the most High God".[13]

It is then because He is God's own Son that Christ is able to offer the only sacrifice worthy of God. And we hear the Eternal Father ratify this condition and this dignity of high priest by an oath: "The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech."[14] Why is Christ the eternal High Priest? Because the union of the Divinity and Humanity in the Incarnation, the union which anoints Him pontiff, is indissoluble. Christ, says St. Paul, "for that He continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood".[15]

And this priesthood is "according to the order" that is to say, according to the resemblance of that of Melchisedech. St. Paul recalls this mysterious personage of the Old Testament who pre-figures, by his name and his offering of bread and wine, the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ. Melchisedech means "King of justice", and Holy Scripture tells us He was "King of Salem",[16] which means "King of peace". Jesus is king; He affirmed His royalty at the moment of His Passion: *Tu dicis;*[17] He is king of peace: *Princeps pacis;*[18] He comes to restore peace here below between God and man; and it is in

[12] Ps. xliv, 5. [13] Hebr. v, 5; cf. vii, 1. [14] Ps. cix, 4.
[15] Hebr. vii, 24. [16] Gen. xiv, 18; Hebr. vii, 1. [17] Joan. xviii, 37.
[18] Isa. ix, 6.

His sacrifice that justice, at last satisfied, and peace, at last recovered, give one another the kiss of reconciliation: *Justitia et pax osculatae sunt.*[19]

Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, is the eternal High Priest, the sovereign mediator between men and His Father: He is the Christ, the high priest pre-eminently: *Unxit te Deus . . . prae consortibus tuis.* That is why His sacrifice, like His priesthood, bears a character of unique perfection and infinite value.

II

Christ Jesus began the work of His priesthood from the time of His Incarnation. "Every high priest . . . is ordained . . . that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices."[20] That is why it was necessary that Christ, the supreme High Priest, should also have something to offer. And what will He offer? What will be the matter of His sacrifice? Let us see what was offered before His coming.

Sacrifice belongs to the very essence of religion; it is as ancient as religion itself.

Since creatures exist it is equitable and just that they should acknowledge the Divine sovereignty; that is one of the elements of the virtue of religion which is itself a form of the virtue of justice. God is the Being Who subsists of Himself; He contains in Himself all the reason of His existence; He is the necessary Being, independent of all other being—while the essence of the creature is to depend on God. In order for the creature to exist, for it to be drawn out of nothing and its existence to be preserved, for it to be able to put forth its activity, God's concourse is necessary. To be then *in the truth* of its nature, the creature must confess and acknowledge this dependence; and this confession, this acknowledgment, is adoration. To adore is to acknowledge the sovereignty of God by our self-abasement: *Venite adoremus et procidamus ante Deum quoniam ipse fecit nos et non ipsi nos.*[21] We can truly say that, in presence of God, our self-abasement ought to go as far as annihilation; that would be the supreme homage, although it could not testify with sufficient truth our condition of mere creatures, and the infinite transcendency of the Divine Being. But as God has given us existence, we have not the right to destroy it by the immolation of ourselves, by the sacrifice of our life. Hence man substitutes creatures in his stead, principally those that serve for the sustenance

[19] Ps. lxxxiv, 11. [20] Hebr. v, 1.
[21] Ps. xciv, 6, and Ps. xcix, 3.

of his life, such as bread, wine, fruit, animals.[22] By the offering, the immolation or destruction of these things, man acknowledges the infinite majesty of the Supreme Being: that is sacrifice. After sin was committed, an expiatory character came to be added to the other notions of sacrifice.

The first men offered fruits and immolated the best of what they had in their flocks so as thus to testify that God is the supreme Master of all things.

Later on, God Himself fixed the forms of sacrifice in the Mosaic law. There were first of all the holocausts, sacrifices of adoration: the victim was entirely consumed. Then there were the peace-offerings of thanksgiving or petition: a part of the victim was burned, another part reserved for the priests, and a third attributed to those for whom the sacrifice was offered. Lastly there were the expiatory sacrifices for sin.

All these sacrifices, says St. Paul, were only figures: *Omnia in figura contingebant illis;*[23] "weak and needy elements": *Egena elementa;*[24] they were only acceptable to God because they represented the sacrifice to come, the only one which could be worthy of Him: the sacrifice of the Man-God upon the Cross.[25]

The most expressive of these figures and symbols was the sacrifice of expiation offered once a year by the high priest, in the name of all the people of Israel, and in which the victim was substituted for the people.[26] What do we see? A victim presented to God by the high priest, who, clad in priestly vestments, places his hands upon it while the multitude remain prostrate in the attitude of adoration. What did this symbolical rite signify? That the victim was substituted for the faithful; it represented them before God, laden, as it were, with all the sins of the people.[27] Then the victim is immolated by the high priest, and this death blow, this immolation, morally strikes the multitude who acknowledge and deplore their crimes before God, sovereign Master of life and death. Next the victim is laid upon the pile and burnt, and the sacrifice ascends to the throne of God, *in odorem suavitatis,* symbol of that offering of themselves, which the people

[22] *Domine Deus noster, qui in his potius creaturis quas ad fragilitatis nostrae subsidium condidisti, tuo quoque nomini munera jussisti dicanda constitui, tribue quaesumus ut et vitae nobis praesentis auxilium et aeternitatis efficiant sacramentum.* Secret of the mass for the Thursday after Passion Sunday.

[23] I Cor. x, 11.

[24] Gal. iv, 9.

[25] *Deus legalium differentiam hostiarum unius sacrificii perfectione sanxisti.* Secret for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost.

[26] Levit. xvi, 9 and 16.

[27] God Himself, in the book of Leviticus, had declared He was the author of this substitution. Levit. xvii, 11.

owed to Him Who is not only our *first principle* but also our *last end.* The high priest having sprinkled the horns of the altar with the blood of the victim, enters into the holy of holies to sprinkle it likewise before the ark of the covenant. In consequence of this sacrifice, God renewed the compact of friendship made with His people.

All this was, as I have said, only a symbol. Where then is the reality? In the bloody immolation of Christ on Calvary. "Christ," says St. Paul, "hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness." *Christus tradidit semetipsum pro nobis oblationem et hostiam Deo in odorem suavitatis.*[28] It is Christ Whom God has shown to men as the Victim of propitiation: *Quem proposuit Deus propitiationem per fidem, in sanguine ipsius.*[29]

But note well that it was upon the cross that Christ Jesus achieved His sacrifice. He inaugurated it at His incarnation in accepting to offer Himself for the human race. You know that the least suffering of Christ, considered in itself, would have sufficed to save humanity. Christ being God, His least actions possessed, on account of the dignity of the Divine Person, an infinite value. But the Eternal Father willed, in His incomprehensible wisdom, that Christ should redeem us by a bloody death upon the Cross.[30] Now, St. Paul expressly tells us that Christ, upon His entrance into the world, accepted this decree of the adorable will of His Father. At the moment of the Incarnation, He embraced with a single glance all He was to suffer from the crib to the cross for the salvation of mankind; and from thenceforward He consecrated Himself to the entire accomplishment of the eternal decree: at that moment, Jesus made the voluntary offering of His own body to be immolated. Let us listen to St. Paul: "When He cometh into the world He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not: but a body Thou hast fitted Me. . . . Sacrifices and oblations and holocausts for sin Thou wouldest not. . . . Then said I: Behold I come to do Thy will, O God."[31] And having thus begun the work of His priesthood, by the perfect acceptation of the entire will of His Father and the oblation of Himself, Christ consummated His sacrifice upon the cross, by a bloody death, He inaugurated His Passion by renewing the total gift He had made of Himself at the moment of the Incarnation. "Father . . ." He says when the chalice of sorrow is presented to Him, "not as I will but as Thou wilt": and His last word before expiring will be that He has fulfilled all: *Consummatum est.*[32]

[28] Ephes. v, 2. [29] Rom. iii, 25. [30] See above p. 60.
[31] Hebr. x, 5 and 8-9. [32] Joan. xix, 30.

You will see that in this sacrifice Christ achieved the most sublime act and rendered the most perfect homage to God His Father. The Man-God, the beloved Son, is Himself the High Priest. It is true that it is in His human nature He offered His sacrifice, since only a man can die; it is true also that this oblation was limited to its historic duration; but the High Priest who offered it is a Divine Person, and this dignity gives infinite value to the immolation. The Victim is holy, pure, imaculate, for it is Christ Himself; it is He, the Lamb without stain, Who takes away the sins of the world with His own blood, shed to the last drop as in the holocausts. Christ was immolated in our place; He substituted Himself for us. Bearing all our iniquities, He became the victim for our sins: *Posuit in eo Deus iniquitatem omnium nostrum.*[33] Lastly, Christ accepted and offered this sacrifice with a liberty full of love. He laid down His own life because He willed to do so,[34] and He willed it because He loved the Father: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem, sic facio.*[35]

Therefore this immolation of a God, an immolation voluntary and full of love, has worked out the salvation of the human race. The death of Jesus redeems us, reconciles us with God, re-establishes the alliance whence all good flows for us, opens again the gates of heaven and restores to us the inheritance of eternal life. This sacrifice henceforth suffices for all: that is why when Christ dies, the veil of the temple is rent in twain to show that the ancient sacrifices are for ever abolished and replaced by the only sacrifice worthy of God. From this time forward salvation and righteousness are only to be had in the participation in the sacrifice of the cross whereof the fruits are inexhaustible. "By *one* oblation," says St. Paul, "[Christ] hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified."[36]

III

Do not be surprised if I have spoken at length of the sacrifice of Calvary: this immolation is reproduced on the altar; the sacrifice of the Mass is the same as that of the Cross. There cannot, in fact, be any other sacrifice than that of Calvary. This oblation is one, says St. Paul; it fully suffices, but Our Lord has willed that it should be continued here below so that the fruits of it may be applied to every soul.

How has Christ accomplished this will of His since that He has ascended into Heaven? It is true He eternally remains the supreme High Priest; but, by the sacrament of Holy Order, He chooses certain

[33] Isa. liii, 6. [34] Joan. x, 18. [35] Ibid. xiv, 31. [36] Hebr. x, 14.

men whom He makes partakers of His priesthood. When the bishop, on the day of ordination, extends his hands to consecrate the priests, angels' voices repeat over each of them: "Thou art a priest for ever; the priestly character thou bearest shall never be taken away, but it is from the hand of Christ thou receivest it, it is His Spirit that fills thee in order to make thee Christ's minister." Christ is about to renew His sacrifice through the intermediary of men.

Let us see what takes place at the altar? After some preparatory prayers and the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel, the priest offers the bread and wine; it is the "offering" or the "offertory". These elements will soon be changed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord. The priest next invites the faithful and the heavenly spirits to surround the altar that is about to become a new Calvary, and to accompany the holy action with praise and homage. After this, he enters silently into more intimate communication with God. The moment of the consecration comes; he extends his hands over the offering as the high priest did of old over the victim to be immolated. He recalls all the gestures and words of Christ at the Last Supper when Our Lord instituted the sacrifice: *Qui pridie quam pateretur;* then identifying himself with Christ, he pronounces the words of the Canon: "This is My Body," "This is My Blood . . ." By these words, the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. By His express will and His formal institution, Christ renders Himself present, really and substantially, with His Divinity and Humanity, under the species which remain and hide Him from our sight.

But, as you know, the efficacy of this formula is still more extensive: by these words the sacrifice is accomplished. In virtue of the words: "This is My Body," Christ, through the intermediary of the Priest, places His Flesh under the species of bread; by the words: "This is My Blood," He places His Blood under the species of the wine. He thus mystically separates His Flesh and Blood which upon the cross were physically separated, a separation that brought death. Since His resurrection, Christ Jesus can die no more: *Mors illi ultra non dominabitur;*[37] it is a mystical separation of His Body and Blood that is made at the altar. "The same Christ Who was immolated upon the cross is immolated upon the altar, although in a different manner": and this immolation, accompanied by the offering, constitutes a true sacrifice: *In hoc divino sacrificio quod in missa peragitur, idem ille Christus continetur et immolatur, qui in ara crucis seipsum cruentum obtulit.*[38]

The communion terminates the sacrifice; it is the last important

[37] Rom. vi, 9. [38] Concil. Trid. Sess. xxii, cap. 2.

act of the Mass. The rite of the manducation of the victim completes the expression of the idea of substitution and above all of unity which is found in all sacrifice. In uniting himself so intimately with the victim substituted for him, man, as it were, immolates himself the more; in eating the Host, become a holy and sacred thing, he is in some way appropriates to himself the Divine virtue resulting from this consecration.

In the Mass, the victim is Christ Himself, the Man-God: that is why communion is pre-eminently the act of union with the Divinity; it is the best and most intimate partaking of the fruits of alliance and Divine life gained for us by the immolation of Christ.

So, then, the Mass is not only a simple representation of the sacrifice of the cross; it has not only the value of a simple remembrance; but it is a true sacrifice, the very same as that of Calvary which it reproduces and continues and of which it applies the fruits.

IV

The *fruits* of the Mass are inexhaustible because they are the same fruits as of the sacrifice of the Cross.

It is the same Christ Jesus Who offers Himself to the Father for us. Doubtless, since His Resurrection, He can no longer merit, but He offers the infinite merits acquired by His Passion. The merits and satisfactions of Jesus always keep their value, just as Christ keeps for ever, with His character of high priest and universal mediator, the Divine reality of His priesthood. Now, after the sacraments, there are no means through which Christ's merits are more especially and fully applied to us than through the Holy Mass. The Holy Council of Trent says: *Oblationis cruentae fructus per hunc incruentam* UBERRIME *percipiuntur*.[39] That is why every priest offers each Mass not only for himself but "for all present, as also for all faithful Christians, both living and dead."[40] So extensive and immense are the fruits of this sacrifice, so sublime is the glory it gives to God!

When therefore we feel the desire of acknowledging the infinite greatness of God and of offering Him, in spite of our poverty as creatures, a homage pleasing to His Majesty, a homage which will surely be accepted at His hands, let us offer the Holy Sacrifice, or else

[39] Sess. xxii, cap. 2.

[40] *Suscipe sancte Pater omnipotens . . . hanc immaculatam hostiam . . . pro omnibus circumstantibus, sed et pro omnibus fidelibus christianis, vivis atque defunctis: ut mihi et illis proficiat ad salutem in vitam aeternam.*

assist at it, and present the Divine Victim to God. The eternal Father will receive from this Victim, as on Calvary, homage of infinite value perfectly worthy of His ineffable perfections.

It is indeed through Jesus Christ, the Man-God, His beloved Son immolated upon the altar, that all glory and honour are rendered to the Father: *Per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso est tibi Deo Patri omnipotenti . . . omnis honor et gloria.*[41] In all religion there is no action that gives so much peace to the soul convinced of its nothingness, yet longing to render to God a homage not unworthy of His Divine greatness. All the united homage of creation and the world of the elect do not give the eternal Father such glory as He receives from the offering of His Son. It needs faith to understand the value of the Mass—that faith which is like a participation of the knowledge God has of Himself and of Divine things. In the light of faith, we can regard the altar as the Heavenly Father does. What does He see upon the altar? He sees "the Son of His love" *Filius dilectionis suae,*[42] the Son in Whom He is well pleased, present in all truth and reality, *Vere et realiter,* and renewing the sacrifice of the cross. God measures all things by the glory He receives from them; and in this sacrifice, as on Calvary, infinite glory is rendered to Him by His Well-Beloved Son. God cannot find more perfect homage than that. It contains and surpasses all.

The Holy Sacrifice is also *a source of confidence and pardon.*

When we are overwhelmed by the remembrance of our sins and seek wherewith to repair our offences and satisfy Divine justice more fully, so that the penalty of sin may be remitted, we cannot find a more efficacious and reassuring means than the Mass. Hear what the Council of Trent says: "By this oblation of the Mass, God, being appeased, grants grace and the gift of penance; He forgives even enormous crimes and sins: *"Hujus quippe oblatione placatus Dominus gratiam et donum poenitentiae concedens, crimina et peccata etiam ingentia dimittitt.*[43] Is it that the Mass forgives sins directly? No, that is reserved for the sacrament of penance and perfect contrition; but the Mass contains abundant and powerful graces which enlighten the sinner and cause him to make acts of sorrow for sin that will lead him to penance, and, through penance, restore to him the friendship of God.[44] If this is true of the sinner not yet absolved by the hand of the priest, it is still

[41] Ordinary of the Mass. [42] Col. i, 13. [43] Sess. xxii, cap. 2.

[44] If we may thus speak, the Eucharist as sacrament procures (or, if you will, has for its primary end) grace *in recto* (directly, formally), and the glory of God *in obliquo* (indirectly); the holy sacrifice procures *in recto* the glory of God, and *in obliquo* the grace of penance and contrition through the sentiments of compunction it stirs up in the soul.

more true of souls that are justified but seek to make as full satisfaction as possible for their faults and so fulfil their desire of reparation. Why is this? Because the Mass is not only a sacrifice of praise, or a simple remembrance of that of the cross; it is a *true sacrifice of propitiation*, instituted by Christ, "in order to apply to us each day the redeeming virtue of the immolation of the cross": *Ut illius cruenti sacrificii crucis salutaris virtus in remissionem eorum, quae a nobis quotidie committuntur, peccatorum, applicaretur.*[45] That is why we see the priest, who already possesses God's friendship, offer this sacrifice for his "innumerable sins, offences and negligences". The Divine Victim *appeases God and renders Him propitious to us.* When therefore the remembrance of our sins troubles us, let us offer this sacrifice: it is Christ Who is offered for us, the "Lamb of God Who takest away the sins of the world", and renews "as often as the commemoration of this victim is celebrated, the work of our redemption": *Quoties hujus hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur.*[46] What confidence we ought to have in this sacrifice of expiation! Whatever be our offences and ingratitude, one Mass gives more glory to God than all our wrongs, so to speak, take from Him.

O Eternal Father, look upon this altar, look upon Thy Son Who loved me and gave Himself for me on Calvary; Who now offers His infinite satisfactions for me: *Respice in faciem Christi tui,*[47] and forget those faults I have committed against Thy goodness. I offer Thee this oblation in which Thou art well pleased, in reparation for all the wrongs done to Thy Divine Majesty!

God cannot but hear such a prayer, for it relies on the merits of the Beloved Son Who, by His Passion, expiated all.[48]

At other times, it is the remembrance of God's mercies that takes possession of us: the benefit of the Christian faith which has opened for us the way of salvation and made us partakers of all Christ's mysteries, whilst awaiting the inheritance of eternal beatitude, the manifold graces placed along our life's path since baptism. When the soul glances back, it is almost overwhelmed at the sight of the numberless gifts God has poured out upon it with open hands: Then, lost in wonder at being the object of Divine complacency, it cries out: "Lord, what can I, poor creature that I am, render to Thee for so many benefits? What can I render that is not unworthy of Thee? Although Thou has no need of my goods, *Bonorum meorum non eges,*[49] it is however just that I should acknowledge Thy infinite goodness towards

[45] Concil. Trid. Sess. xxii, cap. 1. [46] Secret for the ninth Sunday after Pentecost. [47] Ps. lxxxiii, 10. [48] Cf. Rom. v, 8, 9. [49] Ps. xv, 2.

me; I feel the need of doing so in the depths of my being; how can I satisfy it in a manner worthy both of Thy goodness and Thy benefits, O my God?" *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi?*[50] That is the cry of the priest after the communion of the Host. And what reply does the Church place upon his lips? *Calicem salutaris accipiam,* "I will take the chalice of salvation" . . . The Mass is *the supreme act of thanksgiving,* the most perfect and pleasing we can ever render to God. The Gospel tells us that before instituting this sacrifice, Our Lord "returned thanks" to His Father: εὐχαριστήσας. St. Paul employs the same expression, and the Church has retained the term of Eucharistic Sacrifice, that is to say, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, in preference to any other, to designate the oblation of the altar, although it is not exclusive of the other characters of the Mass. See how at every Mass, after the offertory and before proceeding to the consecration, the priest, following the example of Jesus, sings a hymn of thanksgiving: "It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should always and in all places, give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God. Through Christ our Lord. . . .": *Per Christum Dominum nostrum.*[51] Then he immolates the sacred Host: it is the Host that returns thanks for us and worthily acknowledges—for Jesus is God—all the benefits that have come down to us from on high, from the bosom of "the Father of lights": *Omne donum perfectum desursum est, descendens a Patre luminum.*[52] It is through Christ Jesus they have come, and it is through Him too that all the soul's gratitude ascends to the throne of God.

Lastly, the Mass is *a sacrifice of impetration.*

Our neeeds are immense, we are constantly in want of light, strength and consolation and we find them in the Mass. There indeed is He Who said: "I am the Way, I am the Truth, I give Life. Come unto Me all that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. And him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out": *Et eum qui venit ad me, non ejiciam foras.*[53] It is the same Jesus Who "went about doing good": *Pertransiit benefaciendo;*[54] Who forgave the Samaritan woman and Magdalen, and the thief upon the cross; Who delivered the possessed, healed the sick, restored sight to the blind and movement to the paralytic; the same Jesus Who let St. John rest his head on His Sacred Heart . . . But He is there, upon the altar, in the quality of Victim offering Himself at this moment to His Father and offering Himself for us; He is there immolated, and yet living and praying for us:

[50] Ibid. cxl, 12. [51] Preface of the Mass. [52] Jac. i, 17.
[53] Joan. vi, 37. [54] Act. x, 39.

Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis.[55] He offers His infinite satisfactions to obtain the graces of life necessary for us, He supports our supplications by His merits; we cannot be more assured than at this favourable moment of obtaining the graces we need.

Speaking of "the great High Priest that hath passed into the heavens" and is full of compassion for those He vouchsafes to call brethren, St. Paul says the altar where Christ offers and immolates Himself is "the throne of grace" which we must approach with confidence in order "to obtain mercy and find grace" in opportune time.[56]

Remember these words: *Cum fiducia*: "with confidence". That is the condition for being heard. We must offer the Holy Sacrifice or assist at it with faith and confidence. This sacrifice does not act in us, like the sacraments, *ex opere operato*. Its fruits are inexhaustible, but they are in great part measured by our inward dispositions. In every Mass there are infinite possibilities for us of perfection and holiness; but the measure of the graces we receive is the measure of our faith and of our love. You will have noticed that when, before the consecration, the priest enumerates those he wishes to recommend to God, he ends by speaking of all those present, but in indicating the dispositions of their hearts: *Et omnium circumstantium quorum tibi fides cognita est et nota devotio.* "Be mindful, O Lord . . . of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known unto Thee. . . ." These words point out that the graces flowing from the Mass are given to us according to the measure of the ardour of our faith and the sincerity of our devotion. Faith, as I have told you, is the *nota devotio.* What is that? It is the prompt and complete donation of our entire selves to God, to His will and service. God, Who alone reads the depths of our hearts, sees if our desire, our will to be faithful to belong altogether to Him, is sincere. If it is so, we are then, of those, *Quorum fides cognita est et nota devotio,* for whom the priest especially prays, of those who draw largely from the treasure of the infinite merits of Christ offered for them.

Everything comes to us from our Father in heaven, through Christ Jesus in Whom God has placed all the treasures of holiness that men can desire; this Jesus is there upon the altar with His treasures, not only present, but offering Himself for us to the glory of His Father, rendering Him, at this moment, the most perfect homage He can desire, renewing the sacrifice of the cross, so as to continue it and apply its supreme efficacy to us. If we have a profound conviction of these truths there is no grace we cannot ask and obtain. For, at this instant, it is as if we were with the Blessed Virgin, St. John and

[55] Hebr. vii, 25. [56] Hebr. iv, 16.

Magdelen, at the foot of the Cross, at the very fountain-head of all salvation and all redemption, Oh! if we knew the gift of God! *Si scires donum Dei!* . . . If we knew from what a treasury we might draw for ourselves and the whole Church! . . .

V

We must go still further if we wish to enter deeply into the intentions that Jesus Christ had in instituting the Holy Sacrifice and that the Church, His Bride, expresses in the ceremonies and words of the oblation. Through this Divine sacrifice, we can present perfect homage to God, ask Him to forget entirely our faults, render Him worthy thanksgiving and obtain the light and strength necessary for us. But all these attitudes and all these acts of the soul, excellent as they are, may be simply the acts and attitudes of a spectator who assists with piety, but, as it were, outside the holy action.

There is more intimate participation which we must seek to attain. What is this participation? It is the identifying of ourselves, as fully as possible, with Jesus Christ in His double office of Priest and Victim, so that we may be transformed into Him. Is this possible?

As I told you, it was at the moment of the Incarnation that Jesus was anointed Priest, and as Man was able to offer Himself to God as Victim. Now—this is a truth I have shown you at length and want you never to forget—in the Incarnation, the Word associated all humanity to His mysteries and to His Person, by a mystical union. All humanity constitutes a mystical body of which Christ is the Head and we the members. The members cannot, in principle, separate themselves from the head nor remain strangers to its action. The supreme action of Jesus, the one that sums up and crowns His life, is His sacrifice. In the same way that He took upon Himself our human nature, excepting sin, so He wills to make us partakers of the chief mystery of His life. Certainly we were not present in the body on Calvary when He was immolated for us, after having substituted Himself for us; but He has willed, says the Council of Trent, that His sacrifice should be perpetuated, with its inexhaustible virtue, by the Church and her ministers: *Seipsum ab Ecclesia, per sacerdotes, sub signis sensibilibus immolandum.*[57]

It is true that priests alone who participate, through the Sacrament of Holy Order, in the priesthood of Christ, have the right of officially offering the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. However, all the faithful

[57] Sess. xxii, cap. 1.

can, in a real manner, although by a lesser title, offer the Sacred Host. By our baptism we share in some manner in Christ's priesthood, because we share in the Divine being of Christ, in His qualities and His states. He is King; we are kings with Him. He is Priest, we are also priests. Hear what St. Peter says to the baptized: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people," *Vos autem genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis.*[58] The faithful can therefore offer the Sacred Host in union with the priest.

The prayers with which the Church accompanies this Divine Sacrifice make it clearly understood that this oblation also belongs to those who assist at it. What does the priest say, after the offertory, when he turns a second time towards the people before singing the Preface? *Orate, fratre, ut meum* AC VESTRUM *sacrificium acceptabile fiat apud Deum Patrem omnipotentem.* "Brethren, pray that *my* sacrifice *and yours* may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." Again, in the prayer preceding the consecration, the priest beseeches God to be mindful of the faithful who are present, those, he says "for whom we offer, or who offer up to Thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves and those belonging to them": *Memento, Domine, famulorum tuorum . . . pro quibus tibi offerimus vel qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis, pro se suisque omnibus.* And then, extending his hands over the oblation, he asks God to accept it as the oblation of His whole spiritual family gathered around the altar: *Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostrae sed et cunctae familiae tuae, quaesumus, Domine, ut placatus accipias.* As you see, it is the faithful united to the priest and, through him, to Jesus Christ, who offer this sacrifice. Christ is the supreme and principal pontiff; the priest is His minister chosen by Him; lastly the faithful, in their rank, participate in the sacred priesthood and in all the acts of Christ. "Let us be attentive: let us follow the priest who acts in our name, who speaks for us: let us call to mind the ancient custom of each one offering bread and wine to provide the matter of this heavenly sacrifice. The ceremony has changed; its spirit remains; we all offer with the priest; we consent to all that he does, to all that he says. . . . Let us offer . . . with him. Let us offer Jesus Christ; let us offer ourselves with all His Catholic Church wide spread throughout the earth."[59]

Our resemblance with Christ Jesus does not end here. He is the

[58] I Petr. ii, 9; cf. Apoc. i, 6. "Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us a kingdom, and priests to God and His Father, to Him be glory and empire for ever and ever."

[59] Bossuet, *Meditations on the Gospel*, 63rd day.

High Priest, but likewise the Victim, and the desire of His Sacred Heart is that we too should share in this state of victim. It is above all by this that our souls will be transformed and become holy.

Let us consider for a moment the matter of the sacrifice, the bread and wine that are to be changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Fathers of the Church have insisted on the symbolism of these two elements. The bread is made of grains of wheat ground and kneaded together so as to form only one substance; the wine is made of grapes gathered and pressed together so that one beverage may flow from them. That is the image of the union of the faithful with Christ and of all the faithful with one another.

In the Greek rite, the union of the faithful with Christ in His sacrifice is expressed with all the vividness of oriental conceptions. At the beginning of the Mass, the priest, with a small golden lance, divides the bread into several fragments and assigns to each of them, in a special prayer, the part of representing the personages or categories of personages in whose honour or for whom the sacrifice is about to be offered. The first fragment represents Christ; another the Virgin co-redemptress, others represent the apostles, martyrs, virgins, the saint of the day, all the train of the Church triumphant. Next come the fragments reserved for the Church suffering and the Church militant: the Sovereign Pontiff, the bishops and the faithful who are present. This function ended, the priest places all the fragments on the paten and offers them to God, for all will presently be transformed into the Body of Jesus Christ. This ceremony shows how close our union with Christ in this sacrifice ought to be.

The Latin liturgy is more sober, but not less explicit. It possesses one of the most ancient ceremonies that the priest cannot omit without grave sin and that clearly shows we must be inseparable from Christ in His immolation. At the moment of the offertory, the priest pours a little water into the chalice already containing the wine. What does this ceremony signify? It is explained by the prayer that accompanies it: "O God, Who in creating human nature didst wonderfully dignify it, and (by the Incarnation) hast still more wonderfully renewed it, grant that *by the mystery of this Water and Wine, we may be made partakers of His Divinity, Who vouchsafes to become partaker of our humanity,* Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the same Spirit, world without end." Then the priest offers the chalice that it may be accepted by God *in odorem suavitatis*. So, then, the mystery symbolized by this mingling of the water with the wine is first of all the union, in Christ, of the Divinity with the Humanity; from this mystery proceeds another also indicated

by this prayer—our union with Christ in this sacrifice. The wine represents Christ, the water represents the people, as was said by St. John in the Apocalypse and was confirmed by the Council of Trent: *Aquae populi sunt.*[60]

We must be united to Christ in His immolation and offer ourselves with Him; then He takes us with Him, He immolates us with Him, He bears us before His Father, in *odorem suavitatis.* It is ourselves we must offer with Jesus Christ. If the faithful share, through baptism, in the priesthood of Christ, it is, says St. Peter, that they may "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ": *Sacerdotium sanctum, offerre spirituales hostias acceptabiles Deo per Jesum Christum.*[61] This is so true that in more than one prayer following the offering about to be made to God, the Church while awaiting the moment of the consecration, lays stress on this union of our sacrifice with that of her Bridegroom. "Vouchsafe, O Lord", she says "to sanctify these gifts, and receiving the oblation of this spiritual victim, make *us* an eternal sacrifice to Thyself": *Propitius, Domine, quaesumus, haec dona sanctifica, et hostiae spiritualis oblatione suscepta,* NOSMETIPSOS *tibi perfice munus aeternum.*[62]

But in order that we may be thus accepted by God, the offering of ourselves must be united to the offering Christ made of Himself upon the cross and renews upon the altar. Our Lord substituted Himself for us in His immolation; He took the place of us all, and that is why when He died we, in principle, died with Him: *Si unus pro omnibus mortuus est, ergo omnes mortui sunt.*[63] For this mystical death to take place effectually in each one of us, we must unite ourselves to His sacrifice on the altar. And how are we to unite ourselves to Christ Jesus in this character of victim? By yielding ourselves, like Him, to the entire accomplishment of the Divine good pleasure.

It is for God to dispose fully of the victim offered to Him; we must be in this essential attitude of giving *all* to God, of making our acts of self-renunciation and mortification, of accepting the sufferings and trials of each day for love of Him, so that we may be able to say, like Jesus Christ at the moment of His Passion: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem, sic facio.* That is to offer ourselves with Jesus. Let us offer the Divine Son to His Eternal Father and offer ourselves with this "holy Host" in the same dispositions that animated the Sacred Heart of Christ upon the cross: intense love of His Father and of our brethren, ardent desire for the salvation of souls, and full abandonment

[60] Apoc. xvii, 15. *Hac mixtione, ipsius populi fidelis cum capite Christo unio repraesentatur.* Sess. xxii, c. 7. [61] I Petr. ii, 5.

[62] Mass for Whit Monday. This prayer (*Secret*) is to be found likewise in the Mass for Trinity Sunday. [63] II Cor. v, 14.

to all that is willed from on high, above all, if it contains what is painful and vexatious for our nature. When we do this, we offer God the most acceptable homage He can receive from us.

We herein have also the most certain means of being transformed into Jesus, especially if we unite ourselves to Him in Communion, which is the most fruitful partaking of the Sacrifice of the Altar; for, if we are united to Christ He immolates us with Him, renders us pleasing to His Father and makes us, by His grace, more and more like to Himself.

This truth is signified by that mysterious prayer the priest recites after the consecration: "We humbly beseech Thee, almighty God, command these things to be carried by the hands of Thy holy Angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty, that as many of us as, by participation at this altar, shall receive the most sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son may be filled with all heavenly benediction and grace."

It is then a most excellent manner of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice to follow with the eyes, the mind, and the heart, what is passing at the altar, and to associate ourselves with the prayers the Church places at this sacred moment on the lips of her ministers. When, the deep reverence, lively faith, ardent love, and true contrition for our sins,[64] we thus unite ourselves to Christ, Priest and Victim, in His sacrifice, Christ, Who dwells in us, takes all our intentions into His Heart and offers perfect adoration and full satisfaction for us to His Father, He renders Him worthy thanksgiving, and His prayer is all-powerful. All these acts of the eternal High Priest, by which He renews upon the altar His immolation of Calvary, becomes ours.

At the same time that we give to God, through Christ, all honour and all glory: *Omnis honor et gloria,* abundant graces of light and life are poured down upon us and on all the Church: *Fructus uberrime percipiuntur.*[65] Each Mass truly contains all the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Cross. But, if we wish to avail ourselves of them, we must enter into the dispositions and sentiments of the Heart of Jesus when He went to offer Himself on Calvary: *Hoc enim sentite . . . quod et in Christo Jesu.*[66] Then the Eternal High Priest takes us with Him into the Holy of holies unto the throne of the Divine Majesty, to the very source of all grace, of all life and all beatitude.

If you knew the Gift of God! . . .

[64] *Docet sancta synodus . . . per istud sacrificium fieri ut si cum vero corde et recta fide, cum metu et reverentia, contriti ac poenitentes, ad Deum accedamus, misericordiam consequamur et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno.* Concil. Trid. Sess. xxii, cap. 2.
[65] Concil. Trid. Sess. xxii, cap. 2. [66] Philipp. ii, 5.

VIII. PANIS VITAE

SUMMARY. Eucharistic *Communion, the most assured means* of maintaining the Divine life in us. I. Holy Communion is the Banquet wherein Christ gives Himself to us as *the Bread of Life*. II. By Communion Christ *abides in us*, and we in Him. III. Difference between the effects of corporal nourishment, and the fruits of the reception of the Eucharist; how *Christ transforms us* into Himself; the influence of this wonderful food upon the body. IV. *The necessity of preparation* in order to assimilate the fruits of Communion. V. Remote dispositions: *the complete gift of ourselves* to Christ; *the direction of all our actions towards* Communion. VI. *Immediate* preparation: *faith, confidence and love*; how Our Lord rewards these dispositions: *Communion* is the *fullest participation possible in the Divine Sonship of Jesus*. Variety of *formulae*, and attitudes for the immediate preparation. VII. *Thanksgiving* after Communion: *Mea omnia tua sunt et tua mea*.

"GRANT, Almighty God, that as many of us as, by participation at this altar, shall receive the Most Sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son, may be filled with all heavenly benediction and grace." *Ut quotquot, ex hac altaris participatione, sacrosanctum Filii tui Corpus et Sanguinem sumpserimus, omni benedictione coelesti et gratia repleamur.*

These words conclude one of the prayers following the august rite of consecration in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. As you know, Our Lord is present upon the altar, not only to offer perfect homage to His Father by a mystical immolation which renews His oblation on Calvary, but also to make Himself, under the sacramental species, the food of our souls.

Jesus Christ Himself manifested this intention of His Sacred Heart at the moment of instituting this Sacrifice: "Take ye and eat, for this is My Body." *Accipite et manducate; hoc est enim corpus meum;*[1] Take ye and drink, for this is My Blood." *Accipite et bibite: hic est enim calix sanguinis mei.*[2] If Our Lord has willed to make Himself present under the species of bread and wine, it is in order to become

[1] I Cor. xi, 24. [2] Cf. Luc. xxii, 17 and 20.

our Food. And if we seek to know why Christ willed to institute this Sacrament under the form of food, we see that it is first of all to maintain the Divine life within us; next, in order that, receiving this Divine life from Him, we may remain united to Him. Sacramental Communion, the fruit of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is for the soul the most certain means of remaining united to Jesus.

It is in this union with Christ, that, as I have said, the true life of the soul is to be found. Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches; grace is the sap that rises up into the branches to make them bear fruit. Now it is principally by the gift of Himself in the Eucharist that Christ makes grace to abound within us.

Let us contemplate with faith and reverence, love and confidence, this mystery of life whereby we are united to Him Who is at the same time our Divine Model, our infinite satisfaction, and the source of all our holiness.[3] We will next see with what dispositions we ought to receive the Holy Eucharist that so we may arrive at the perfection of this union which Christ wishes to effect with us in giving us Himself.

I

When, in prayer, we ask Our Lord to tell us why He willed, in His Eternal Wisdom, to establish this ineffable Sacrament, what does He reply?

To begin with, He repeats those same words with which He first announced the institution of the Eucharist to the Jews. "As the Living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." *Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem, et qui manducat me et ipse vivet propter me.*[4] It is as if He said: My desire is to communicate My Divine life to you. I hold My being, My life, all, from My Father, and because I hold all from Him, I live only for Him; I desire with an intense desire that you, likewise, holding all from Me, live only for Me. Your corporal life is sustained and developed by food; I will to be the food of your soul, so as to preserve and develop its life which is Myself.[5] He that eats Me, lives by My life; I possess the fulness of grace, and those to whom I give Myself as food partake of this grace. The Father has life in Himself, but He

[3] Catechism of the Council of Trent. Cf. xx, § 1.

[4] Joan. vi, 57.

[5] *Sumi autem voluit sacramentum hoc tamquam spiritualem animarum cibum quo alantur et confortentur viventes vita illius qui dixit: et qui manducat me et ipse vivet propter me.* Concil. Trid. Sess. xiii, cap. 2.

has given to the Son also to have life in Himself: *Sicut enim Pater habet vitam in semetipso, sic dedit et Filio habere vitam in semetipso.*[6] And because I possess this life I am come to give it fully and abundantly: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*[7] I give you life because I give Myself as food. I am the Living Bread, the Bread of Life come down from Heaven so as to give you eternal life; that Bread which gives the Heavenly life, the everlasting life, of which grace is the dawn. *Ego sum panis vitae, panis vivus qui de caelo descendi.*[8] The Jews in the desert did eat manna, a corruptible food; but I am the ever Living Bread, ever needful for your souls, for, "except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you". *Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis . . . non habebitis vitam in vobis.*[9]

Such are the very words of Jesus. It is therefore not only in order that we may adore Him, and offer Him to His Father as infinite satisfaction, that Christ renders Himself present on the altar; it is not only to visit us that He comes, but it is that we may eat Him as the Food of our souls, and that eating Him, we may have life, the life of grace here below, the life of glory hereafter.

"As the Son of God is Life by essence, it is for Him to promise and to give life. The holy Humanity He has vouchsafed to take in the fulness of time, touching Life so closely, takes its virtue so fully, that an inexhaustible source of living water springs forth from it. Is He not the Bread of Life, or rather, is it not a Living Bread which we eat so that we may have life? For this Sacred Bread is the Holy Flesh of Jesus, that living Flesh, that Flesh conjoined to life, that Flesh altogether filled and penetrated with a vivifying spirit. If ordinary bread, which is without life, preserves the life of our bodies, with what a wonderful life shall we not live who eat a Living Bread, Life itself, at the table of the Living God? Who has ever heard of a like prodigy; that one can eat life? It belongs to Jesus alone to give us such Food. He is Life by nature; whosoever eats Him eats Life. Oh, sweetest Banquet of the children of God!"[10] This is why the priest, when he gives Holy Communion, says to each one: "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to life everlasting!" *Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat aninam tuam in vitam aeternam.*

I have said that the Sacraments produce the grace they signify. In the natural order, food preserves, increases, restores, and develops the life of the body.[11] It is the same with this Heavenly Bread; it is the

[6] Joan. v, 26. [7] Ibid. x, 10. [8] Ibid. vi, 35, 48, 51. [9] Ibid. vi, 54.
[10] Bossuet, *Sermon for Holy Saturday, Oratorical Works.*
[11] According to St. Thomas, these are the four effects of food; the holy doctor applies this to the Eucharist, the food of the soul.

Food of the soul which preserves, repairs, and rejoices the soul, and increases the life of grace within it because it gives it the very Author of grace. The Divine life can enter into us by other ways, but it is by Holy Communion that this life inundates our souls "like an impetuous torrent". Communion is so much a Sacrament of life that, of itself, it remits and effaces the venial sins to which we no longer have any attachment.[12] It acts in such a way that the Divine life within the soul recovers its vigour and beauty, grows, develops, and bears abundant fruit. O Sacred Banquet in which the soul receives Christ! *O sacrum convivium in quo Christus sumitur . . . mens impletur gratia.*[13] O Jesus Christ, Incarnate Word, in Whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *corporally*",[14] enter into me to make me a partaker of this fulness; this is life for me, since to receive Thee is to become a child of God,[15] that is to have a share in the life Thou hast received from Thy Father and by which Thou livest for Thy Father—this life which overflows, through grace, from Thy Humanity, upon all Thy brethren. Come to be my Food, that so I may live by Thy life: *Et qui manducat Me et ipse vivet propter Me.*

II

One of the intentions of the Heart of Jesus in instituting the Sacrament of the Eucharist, is, therefore, to be the heavenly Bread which maintains and increases the Divine life in us. But Our Lord has willed another end which completes the first: *Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in eo,*[16] "he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him." What is the meaning of the word *manere*, "abide"?

When, we read the Gospel of St. John, who tells us the words of Jesus, we see that he nearly always uses this term when he wishes to express perfect union. There is no union greater than that of the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity, since, with the Holy Ghost, they both possess one and the same Divine Nature; St. John says that the Father "abideth" in the Son.[17]

"To abide in Christ" is, first of all, to share by grace in His Divine Sonship: it is to be one with Him by being, as He is, although in a different manner, the child of God. That is the essential and fundamental union, which Christ Himself points out in the parable of the

[12] See above, p. 175, text from the Catechism of the Council of Trent.
[13] Antiphon of Magnificat of 2nd Vespers of Corpus Christi.
[14] Col. ii, 9. [15] Joan. i, 12. [16] Ibid. vi, 55. [17] Joan. xiv, 10.

vine: "I am the Vine; you the branches: he that *abideth* in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit."

This union is not the only one. "To abide" in Christ is to be identified with Him in all that relates to our intelligence, our will, our activity. We abide in Christ *through our intelligence* when we accept with a simple, pure, and integral act of faith all that Christ tells us. The Word is always in the Bosom of the Father; He sees the Divine secrets, and He makes us share in what He sees: *Unigenitus Filius, qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit.*[18] By faith, we say: "Yes", *Amen,* to all that the Incarnate Word tells us; we accept His word; and thus identify ourselves with Christ in our intelligence. Holy Communion makes us abide in Christ by faith; we can only receive Him if we accept in faith all that He says and all that He is. When Our Lord announced the institution of the Eucharist to the Jews, He said to them: "I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger: and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst."[19] And as the Jews murmured in their incredulity, He repeated His words: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: he that believeth in Me hath everlasting life."[20] It is in faith that Our Lord gives Himself to us as food, and to be united to Him is to accept, by the adherence of our intelligence to His word, all that he reveals to us; Christ is the food of our intelligence in bringing us all truth.

To abide in Him is also to submit *our will* to His, it is to make all our supernatural activity dependent on His grace. That is to say we must abide in His love by accepting to do His Will: *Si praecepta mea servaveritis,* MANEBITIS IN DILECTIONE MEA, *sicut et ego Patris mei praecepta servavi, et maneo in ejus dilectione.*[21] It is to prefer His desires to our own, it is to espouse His interests, it is to yield ourselves to Him entirely, without counting the cost, reserving nothing, and taking nothing back, for one cannot "abide" unless one is firm and stable, with that absolute confidence that a bride should have in her bridegroom. The bride is never more pleasing to the bridegroom than when she relies only upon his wisdom, his power, his strength and his love. In thus giving food to love, this heavenly Bread vivifies our will.

This is the supernatural condition in which Jesus Christ desires to place the soul that receives Him. He comes into it so that it may "abide" in Him, that is to say, having full confidence in His word, it abandons itself to Him in order to accomplish His Divine good pleasure, and to have no other mainspring for its activity than the action of His Spirit: *Qui adhaeret Domino unus spiritus est.*[22]

[18] Ibid. i, 18. [19] Ibid. vi, 35. [20] Ibid. vi, 47. [21] Ibid. xv, 10.
[22] I Cor. vi, 17.

Not only do we abide in Our Lord, but He also abides in us: *Et ego in eo.*[23] See what took place in the Incarnate Word. There was in Him a very intense human and natural activity. But the Word, to Whom the Humanity of Christ was indissolubly united, was the furnace where all His activity was nourished, and whence it radiated.

The desire of Christ in giving Himself to us is to produce something analogous within us. Without establishing a union as close as that of the Word with His Sacred Humanity, Christ, in giving Himself to us, wills to be in us, by His grace and the action of His Spirit, the principle of all our inner activity: *Et ego in eo;* He is in the soul, He abides in it, but He is not idle, He wills to work in it,[24] and when the soul remains given up to Him, to His every will, then Christ's action becomes so powerful that this soul will infallibly be carried on to the highest perfection, according to God's designs. For Christ comes to the soul with His Divinity, His merits, His riches, to be its Light and Way, its Truth, Wisdom, Justice and Redemption: *Qui factus est nobis sapientia a Deo, et justitia, et sanctificatio et redemptio,*[25] in a word, to be the Life of the soul, to live Himself within the soul: *Vivo ego, jam non ego; vivit vero in me Christus.*[26] This is the dream of the soul: to make only one with the Beloved. Communion, in which the soul receives Christ as Food, brings about the realization of this dream, by transforming it, little by little, into Christ.

III

The Fathers of the Church point out the great difference there is between the action of the food which serves to nourish our corporal life, and the effect produced in the soul by the Eucharistic Bread.

When we assimilate the food of the body, we change it into our own substance, while Christ gives Himself to us as food in order to transform us into Himself. St. Leo writes these remarkable words: "Participation in the Body and Blood of Christ produces in us none other effect than to make us pass into that which we take." *Nihil aliud agit participatio Corporis et Sanguinis Christi, quam ut in id quod sumimus transeamus.*[27] St. Augustine is still more explicit; He makes Christ say: "I am the Food of the strong; have faith and eat Me. But thou wilt not change Me into thyself, it is thou who wilt be transformed into Me."[28] And St. Thomas, with his usual clearness, has

[23] Joan. xv, 5. [24] *Usque modo operor.* Joan. v, 17. [25] I Cor. i, 30.
[26] Gal. ii, 20. [27] *Sermo* 63 *de Passione* 12, c. 7. [28] *Confess.* L. vii, c. 4.

defined this doctrine in a few lines: "The principle of arriving at a clear understanding of the proper effect of a Sacrament, is to judge of it by analogy with the matter of the Sacrament. . . . The matter of the Eucharist is a food; its proper effect must then be analogous to that of food. He who assimilates corporal food transforms it into himself; this change repairs the losses of the organism and gives it the necessary increase. But the Eucharistic Food, instead of being transformed into the one who takes it, transforms him into Itself. It follows that the proper effect of the Sacrament is to transform us so much into Christ, that we can truly say: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me."[29]

How is this spiritual transformation brought about? In receiving Jesus Christ, we receive Him wholly: His Body, His Blood, His Soul, His Humanity, His Divinity. Christ makes us sharers of His thoughts, and His sentiments; He communicates His virtues to us, but above all, He enkindles in us the fire that He came to cast upon earth,[30] the fire of love, of charity: that is the result of this transformation produced by the Eucharist. "The efficacy of this Sacrament," writes St. Thomas, "is to work a certain transformation of ourselves into Christ, by means of charity. And that is the fruit proper to It . . . the property of charity is to transform the one who loves into the object of his love." That is to say, that the coming of Christ in us tends, of its nature, to establish between His thoughts and ours, between His sentiments and our sentiments, between His Will and our will, such an exchange, such a correspondence and similitude that we have no other thoughts, no other sentiments, no other desires than those of Christ: *Hoc enim sentite in vobis, quod et in Christo Jesu.*[31] And this through love. Love yields our will to Christ, and through it, all our being, all our energies; and because love thus yields up the whole man it is the means of our supernatural transformation and growth. St. John has well said: "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him."[32]

Without this, there is no real "communion". Without this, we receive Christ with the lips, it is true, but He means us to be united to Him with mind and heart and will and all our soul, in order that we may share His Divine life in as far as is possible here below, and that, by the faith we have in Him, by the love we bear towards Him, it may be really His life, and no longer our *ego* that is the principle of our life. This is very clearly shown in a prayer which the Church makes the priest recite after Communion: "Grant, O Lord, that the operation

[29] In IV Sentent. Dist. 12, q. 2, a. 1. [30] Luc. xi, 49. [31] Philipp. ii, 5.
[32] Joan. iv, 16.

of Thy heavenly Gift may possess both our minds and bodies, that its effect, and not our senses, may ever have dominion within us."[33]

This prayer of the Church leads us to understand that the Eucharistic action overflows from the soul upon the body itself. It is true that it is to the soul Christ immediately unites Himself; it is to the soul that He comes first of all, to assure and confirm its deification: *Ut inter ejus membra numeremur cujus Corpori communicavimus et Sanguini.*[34] But the union of body and soul is so close that in increasing the life of the soul, in powerfully drawing it towards heavenly delights, the Eucharist tempers the heat of the passions, and brings peace to all our being.

The Fathers of the Church[35] even speak of a still more direct influence. What is there astonishing in this? When Jesus Christ dwelt upon earth, the simple contact with His Holy Humanity sufficed to heal the sick. Is this curative power to be lessened because Christ veils Himself under the Sacramental Species? "Do you think, my daughters," said St. Teresa, "that this most holy nourishment does not also sustain the body, and is not a remedy for its ills. As for myself, I know it has this virtue. I know a person (the Saint is doubtless speaking of herself) who, besides other great infirmities, often experienced much suffering before going to Communion, and had no sooner received the Bread of Life than she felt all her sufferings had vanished, as if a hand had taken them away. . . . Certainly, His Majesty is not accustomed to pay so badly for the lodging He makes in the inn of our soul when He there meets with a good welcome."[36] Before Communion the priest beseeches Christ "that the participation of His Sacred Flesh may be a safeguard and remedy both of soul and body": *Perceptio Corporis tui, Domine Jesu Christe . . . prosit mihi ad tutamentum mentis et corporis.* The Church makes us repeat the same prayer in more than one of her postcommunions at the moment of returning thanks to God for the Divine Gift. "Purify our minds we beseech Thee, O Lord, and renew them with heavenly sacraments, that by them, our bodies themselves may receive both present and future aids."[37]

[33] *Mentes nostras et corpora possideat, quaesumus, Domine, doni caelestis operatio; ut non noster sensus in nobis, sed jugiter ejus praeveniat effectus.* Postcommunion of 15th Sunday after Pentecost.

[34] Postcommunion of the Saturday of the 3rd week in Lent.

[35] St. Justin. *Apolog. ad Anton. Pium*, n. 66. S. Iraen. *Contra haereses*, L. v, c. 2; St. Cyrill. Hierosol. *Catech.* xxii (*Mystag* IV), n. 3; *Catech.* xxiii (*Mystag* V), n. 15.

[36] *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxv. The Saint is even more explicit in ch. xxx of her *Life by herself.*

[37] *Sit nobis Domine* REPARATIO *mentis* ET CORPORIS *caeleste mysterium.* Postcommunion of 8th Sunday after Pentecost. *Purifica, quaesumus, Domine, mentes nostras et renova caelestibus sacramentis: ut consequentur et* CORPORUM PRAESENS *pariter et futurum capiamus* AUXILIUM. Postcommunion of 16th Sunday after Pentecost.

Do not let us forget that Christ is ever living, ever acting. In coming to us He unites our members to His own; He purifies, He uplifts, He sanctifies, He transforms, as it were, all our faculties, so that, to borrow the beautiful thought of an ancient author, we love God with the Heart of Christ, we praise God with the life of Christ, we live by His life. The Divine Presence of Jesus and His sanctifying virtue penetrate our whole being, both body and soul, with all their powers, so intimately, that we become "other Christs".

Such is the truly sublime culmination of this union with Christ in the Eucharist which each Communion tends to make us realize ever more perfectly. If we but knew the gift of God! For those who draw the water of grace at this fountain "shall not thirst for ever": *Qui autem biberit ex aqua quam ego dabo ei, non sitiet in aeternum.*[38] At this fountain they find every good: *Quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?*[39] From the altar all heavenly benediction and grace flow for us: *Omni benedictione caelesti et gratia repleamur.*

IV

These wonderful effects are not wrought in the soul unless it is prepared for the effusion of so many graces. It is true, as I have said, that the Sacraments produce fruit of themselves, the fruit for which they were instituted; but on condition that no obstacle be opposed to their action: *Non ponentibus obicem.* Now what is here the obstacle?

Naturally, there can be none on Christ's part: in Him are all the treasures of the Divinity, and He infinitely desires to communicate them to us in giving Himself. He is not parsimonious, for He has come to bring us life, He wills to give it with superabundance: *Ut abundantius habeant.* He repeats to each one of us what He said to His Apostles on the evening of the institution of this Sacrament: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you." *Desiderio desideravi hoc pascha manducare vobiscum.*[40]

Do not let us lose sight of the fact that Communion is not a human invention, but a Divine Sacrament instituted by Eternal Wisdom. Now it belongs to wisdom to proportion the means to the end. If, then, our Divine Saviour instituted the Eucharist in order to unite Himself to us and make us live by His life, we may be assured that the Sacrament contains all that is needful to bring about this union

[38] Joan. iv, 13. [39] Rom. viii, 32. [40] Luc. xxii, 15.

and that to a supreme degree. In this marvellous invention are hidden virtualities of incomparable efficacy to produce in us a Divine transformation.

The obstacle is then in us. What is it?

To know it we have only to consider the very nature of the Sacrament. It is a Food which is to *maintain the life* of the soul and *strengthen union*.

All that is opposed to the supernatural life and union is then an obstacle to the reception and to the fruit of the Eucharist. Grave sin which causes the death of the soul is the absolute obstacle. As food is only given to the living, so the Eucharist is only given to those who already possess the life of grace. Together with "a right intention", this is the first condition for the faithful to be able to approach Christ and receive the Bread of Life. The great Pontiff Pius X established this in a memorable document.[41] The Sacrament acts: *Ex opere operato:* of itself, the Eucharist feeds the soul and increases grace and the habit of charity. This is the first and essential fruit of the Sacrament.

There are also other fruits, secondary, it is true, but yet so great that they merit to be brought forward. These are: the actual graces of union which put charity into action,[42] excite our fervour to return love for love, to perform the Divine good pleasure, to avoid sin, and that fill the soul with joy. "This heavenly Bread, containing in itself all sweetness" is communicated to the soul to enkindle its devotion in the service of the Lord and make it strong against sin and temptation.[43] Now these secondary effects may be more or less abundant, and they practically depend in a large measure on our dispositions,[44] above all, when love, the principle of union, is the motive-power which urges us to prepare for Our Lord a dwelling less unworthy of His Divinity, and to render Him with all possible affection the homage due to Him for vouchsafing to come to us.

Certainly, Jesus Christ, being absolutely free and infinitely good, grants His gifts to whom He pleases; but apart from the fact that His Infinite Majesty requires that we should prepare for Him, according to the measure of our weakness, a dwelling in our heart, can we doubt for

[41] Decree of Dec. 20th 1905. The Sovereign Pontiff thus explains what a right intention is: "he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vainglory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects."

[42] "It is charity which is brought into exercise in the Sacrament, not only as to the habit of charity, but also as to the act." St. Thom. III, q. lxxix, a. 4.

[43] See *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, ch. xx, § 1.

[44] D. Coghlan, *De SS. Eucharistia*, p. 368.

a single moment that He regards with extreme graciousness the efforts of a soul that desires to receive Him with faith and love?[45]

See in the Gospel how He rewarded the desires and efforts of Zachaeus. This prince of the publicans desired only to see Jesus, and Our Lord, meeting him, anticipates his desires and tells him He wills to abide in his house; and His visit brings pardon and salvation to this man. See again when Our Lord is received by Simon the Pharisee. Behold, the woman, Magdalen, enters the dining-hall during the meal, draws near to Jesus, begins to pour perfumes on His Feet, and to kiss them. But immediately, those present recognize in this woman one who is a sinner. And Simon the Pharisee is indignant within himself, thinking: "If only Jesus knew what mannner of woman this is!" Christ knows these secret thoughts and He defends Magdalen. He contrasts what she does to please Him with what the Pharisee has omitted in the exercise of hospitality towards Him: "Dost thou see this woman?" He says to Simon. "I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My Feet; but she with tears hath washed My Feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My Feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My Feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less." And He said to her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee . . . thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace."[46]

You see, then, that Our Lord is attentive to our dispositions, to the marks of love with which we receive Him. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of union, and the fewer obstacles to the perfection of this union with which Christ meets, the more the grace of His Sacrament acts in us. The Catechism of the Council of Trent tells us that "We receive all the abundance of God's gifts when we partake of the Eucharist with a heart well-disposed and perfectly prepared."[47]

V

Now there is a very important *general disposition* drawn from the nature of union, which serves admirably as an habitual preparation for

[45] "Whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better; therefore, care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving." Pius X. Decree of Dec. 20th 1905 on Daily Communion.

[46] Luc. vii, 36-39; 44-50. [47] Ch. xx, § 2.

our union with Jesus Christ, and, above all, for the prefection of this union: it is *the total gift,* frequently renewed, *of ourselves to Jesus Christ.*

The more we remain in this essential disposition which Baptism inaugurated, the better is our remote preparation for receiving the abundance of Eucharistic grace. To remain attached to venial sin, to deliberate imperfections, to wilful negligences, and premeditated infidelities, all these things cannot fail to impede Our Lord's action when He comes to us. If we desire the perfection of this union we ought not to bargain with Christ for our heart's liberty, nor reserve any place, however small, for creatures loved for their own sake. We should empty ourselves of self, disengage ourselves from creatures, aspire after the perfect coming of Christ's Kingdom within us by the submission of all our being to His Gospel and to the action of His Spirit.

This is a most excellent disposition. What is it that prevents Christ from identifying us perfectly with Himself when He comes to us? Do our infirmities of mind or body, the miseries inherent to our condition as exiles, the limitations of our human nature? Certainly not. These imperfections, or even faults that escape us and that we deplore and strive to destroy, do not prevent the action of Christ. On the contrary, He comes to help us to overcome these faults, and to support our weaknesses patiently; for He is a compassionate High Priest Who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust,"[48] and Who has taken upon Himself all our miseries: *Vere languores nostros ipse tulit.*[49]

The things that hinder the perfection of union are the bad habits known and not repudiated, which, from want of generosity, we have not the courage to attack; voluntary attachment to ourselves or to creatures. Christ cannot make us share in the abundance of His grace as long as we do not labour, by watchfulness over ourselves and by mortification, to uproot these bad habits and break off these attachments.

And this is true, above all, of deliberate or habitual faults against charity towards our neighbour. I shall develop this point when I show the motives we have for loving one another. But I must say a word here. Our Lord is with His Mystical Body; all Christians are His members by grace, and when we communicate we must do so with the whole Christ, that is to say, unite ourselves by charity with Christ in His physical being and with His members; we cannot separate these two. The Council of Trent says: "Our Lord has willed to leave us

[48] Ps. cii, 14. [49] Isa. liii, 4.

this Sacrament as a symbol of the intimate union of this mystical body of which He is the Head."[50] St. Paul says in speaking of the Eucharist: "For we being many are one bread, one body, all that partakes of one bread."[51] Hear what Our Lord Himself says: "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift."[52] This is why the least wilful coldness, the least resentment harboured in the soul towards our neighbour form a great obstacle to the perfection of that union which Our Lord wishes to have with us in the Eucharist.

If then we discover in our heart some voluntary attachment to our judgment, or self-love, or, above all, habits contrary to charity, we may be certain that as long as we tolerate this state of things, the abundance of the fruits of the Sacrament will remain restricted. But if we take the resolution of correcting ourselves of our bad habits, and make serious efforts to destroy them, we may be assured that Our Lord will regard us with kindness, bless our efforts and reward us abundantly, when we approach Him in Holy Communion to find in Him the necessary strength.

Again, it is true that our dispositions do not cause the grace of the Sacrament; all they do is to give it free course, by removing the obstacles; but we must open our hearts as widely as possible to the outpouring of the Divine Gift. An excellent disposition, then, is to try to refuse nothing to Christ. A soul that remains habitually in this disposition of putting away all that could offend the sight of the Divine Guest, and holding itself always ready to accomplish His Divine Will, is admirably "adapted" for the Sacramental action.

And what is the reason of this? The Eucharist is the Sacrament of union, as the word "communion" indicates; it is in order to unite Himself to us that Our Lord comes to us. To unite is to make of two things only one thing. But we unite ourselves to Christ as He is. Now every Communion presupposes the Sacrifice of the Altar, and consequently, the immolation of the Cross. In the offering of the Holy Mass, Christ associates us in His state of High Priest, and in Communion He causes us to participate in His condition of Victim. The Holy Sacrifice supposes, as I have said, that inward and entire oblation that Our Lord made to the Will of His Father when entering into the

[50] (*Sacramentum hoc voluit esse*) *symbolum unius illius corporis, cujus ipse caput existit, cuique nos, tamquam membra, arctissima fidei, spei et caritatis connexione adstrictos esse voluit, ut idipsum omnes diceremus nec essent in nobis schismata.* Sess. xiii, cap. 4.

[51] I Cor. x, 17. [52] Matth. v, 23-24.

world, an oblation that He often renewed during His life and completed by His death on Calvary. All this, says St. Paul, is recalled to our minds by Communion: "*As often* as you shall eat this Bread and drink [of] the chalice, you shall show forth the death of the Lord." QUOTIESCUMQUE *enim manducabitis panem hunc et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis donec veniat.*[53] Jesus Christ gives Himself to us as Food, but after having been first offered as Victim; Victim and Food are, in the Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament—two inseparable characters. And that is why this habitual disposition of giving oneself totally is so important. Christ gives Himself to us in the measure we give ourselves to Him, to His Father, to our brethren who are the members of His mystical Body; this essential disposition makes us one with Christ, but with Christ as victim; it establishes sympathy between the two terms of the union.

When Our Lord finds a soul thus disposed, given up entirely and unreservedly to His action, He acts in it with His Divine virtue which works marvels of holiness because it meets with no obstacle. The absence of this *dispositio unionis* also explains why some advance so little in perfection, despite frequent Communions. Christ does not find in these souls the supernatural alacrity which would permit Him to act freely in them. Their vanity, self-love, touchiness, selfishness, jealousy and sensuality prevent the *union* between them and Christ being made with that intensity, that fulness by which the transformation of the soul is effected and completed.

Let us ask Our Saviour Himself to help us to acquire this fundamental disposition: it is extremely precious because it adapts our soul in a wonderful manner to the action of the Sacrament of Divine union.

To this disposition of union, which serves excellently as habitual preparation, we can join another, also remote, which consists in *direct ing* each day by an explicit act, *all our actions towards Communion,* in such a way that our union with Christ in the Eucharist becomes truly the sun of our life. . . . At the time of his ordination to the priesthood, St. Francis of Sales took the resolution of making of every action of the day a preparation for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the morrow, so as to be able to reply truly if anyone asked him the reason of his conduct: "I am preparing myself to celebrate Mass."[54] This is an excellent practice.

But if it is true that without Jesus Christ we can do nothing, how much more do we realize this when it is a question of our accomplishing the most holy action of each day! To be sacramentally united to

[53] I Cor. xi, 26. [54] Hamon, *Vie de St. Francois de Sales,* t. I, L. II, ch. I.

Jesus in the Eucharist is the highest action possible to us; all human wisdom, however elevated it may be, is nothing in comparison to this act. We are incapable of preparing ourselves fittingly for it without the help of Christ Himself. We show our reverence for Him by our prayers, but it is He Who must prepare a dwelling for Himself in us. The Most High must sanctify His own tabernacle. As the Psalmist says: *Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum Altissimus.*[55] Let us ask this of Our Lord when, during the day, we go to visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament. "O Jesus Christ, Incarnate Word, I desire to prepare a dwelling for Thee within myself, but I am incapable of this work. O Eternal Wisdom! prepare my soul to become Thy temple by Thy infinite merits. Grant that I may attach myself to Thee alone! I offer Thee my actions and the sufferings of this day in order that Thou mayest render them pleasing in Thy Divine sight, and that to-morrow I may not come before Thee with empty hands." Such a prayer is excellent, the day is thus directed towards union with Christ; love, the principle of union, envelops our acts. Far from murmuring against what may happen to us that is disagreeable or painful, we shall offer it to Christ by a movement of love, and the soul will thus be prepared quite naturally, as it were, when the moment comes to receive its God.

VI

After this, the moment of Communion being come, there will be nothing more to do than to make the *immediate preparation* required by the infinite dignity of Him Who comes to us. And although this preparation derives its value and virtue from that fundamental disposition of which I have spoken, it is useful to say a few words about it.

One of the most important immediate dispositions is *faith*. The Eucharist is essentially a mystery of faith: *Mysterium fidei.*[56] But are not all the mysteries of Christ mysteries of faith? Certainly they are, but nowhere is faith so useful as in this mystery. Why is this? Because neither the reason nor the senses perceive anything of Christ. Look at the manger; Christ is a little Child, but the angels hymn His coming that they may manifest His Divinity, and His mission as Saviour of mankind; during His public life, His miracles and the sublimity of His doctrine give testimony that He is the Son of God; on Thabor, His Humanity is transfigured in His Divinity; on the Cross itself, the Divinity does not entirely disappear: nature proclaims, by the upheaval

[55] Ps. xlv, 5.
[56] Words contained in the formula of the Consecration of the Precious Blood.

it undergoes, that the Crucified is the Creator of the world.[57] But on the altar, neither the Humanity nor the Divinity are apparent: *Latet simul et humanitas.*[58] For the senses, the sight, the taste, the touch, there are only the bread and wine. To see through these appearances, to penetrate these veils as far as the Divine realities, needs the eye of faith.

This appears very clearly when we read the chapter in which St. John records how Christ announced the mystery of the Eucharist to the Jews.[59] The Saviour had shown, on the previous day, His goodness and power in feeding some thousands of men with a few loaves. Seeing this striking miracle, the Jews had cried out: "This is of a truth the Prophet that is to come!" And, passing from admiration to action, they try to take Him by force and make Him king. But now Jesus reveals a much more astounding mystery than the prodigy of the multiplication of the loaves, to them. "I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven." These words alone immediately arouse murmurs among the Jews: "Is not this the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then saith he, I came down from heaven?" And Jesus answers them: "Murmur not among yourselves . . . I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die. . . . If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my Flesh, for the life of the world." Thereupon the Jews, becoming more incredulous, begin to dispute among themselves: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" But Christ withdraws none of His assertions, on the contrary, He makes them more emphatic: "Amen, amen, I say to you: Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life . . . for My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed." Then incredulity gains ground even among His disciples. Some among them protest: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" From this moment, adds St. John, many of His disciples believed no more in Jesus, "they went back and walked no more with Him." After they had gone, Our Lord turned towards the twelve Apostles and said to them: "Will you also go away?" Then Peter answering said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Let us also believe with Peter, and the Apostles who remained faithful; let our faith supply what is lacking to the senses: *Praestet fides*

[57] Luc. xxiii, 44 and 51. [58] Hymn *Adoro te.* [59] Joan. vi, 30-70.

supplementum sensuum defectui.[60] Jesus Christ has said: "This is My Body, this is My Blood; take, eat, and you shall have life." "Thou hast said it, Lord; that is sufficient, I believe it. This Bread that Thou givest is Thy own self, the Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, Who becamest Incarnate and wast delivered up for me; Who wast born at Bethlehem, didst dwell in Nazareth, Who didst cure the sick and give sight to the blind; Who didst forgive Magdalen and the Good Thief; Who at the Last Supper didst let St. John lay his head upon Thy Heart; Thou Who art the Way, the Truth and the Life; Who didst die for love of me, and didst ascend into heaven, and now, at the right hand of God Thy Father, dost reign and intercede unceasingly for us. O Jesus, Eternal Truth, Thou declarest that Thou art present upon the altar, really and substantially, with Thy Humanity and all the treasures of Thy Divinity. I believe it, and because I believe it I cast myself down and adore Thee. Receive, as my God and my All, this homage of my adoration." This act of faith is the most sublime we can make and the most complete homage of our intelligence to Christ.

It is likewise an act of *confidence*. For the Christ that faith presents to us comes to us as our Chief, and our Elder Brother. We must enkindle our desires. "O Lord Jesus," we should say, with the priest at the moment of Communion, "regard not my sins, (which I detest) but the faith of Thy Church, which tells me that Thou art there present under the veils of the Host, in order to come to me. Thou hast this power, O Christ Jesus, of drawing me entirely to Thyself, so that I may be transformed into Thee. I yield myself entirely to Thee that Thou mayest be the Master of all my being, and of all my activity, that I may live only on Thee, by Thee, and in Thee." If we ask this grace, let us be certain that Christ will grant it to us; that is why we ought to go so far as to be importunate, without placing any bounds to our holy desires. If we took into account what riches this Sacrament possesses—and they are infinite, since it contains Christ Himself[61]—if we knew all the fruits that the coming of Christ is able to produce in us, we should have an immense desire to have them brought forth in us. All the fruits of the Redemption are contained in the Eucharist to become ours: *Ut Redemptionis tua fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus.*[62] Our Lord wills, with an intense will, to give us a part in them, but He requires that we should enlarge our hearts by desire and confidence.

[60] Hymn *Pange lingua.*

[61] *Utilitatis hujus Sacramenti magna est et universalis . . . nam cum hoc Sacramentum sit Dominicae Passionis, continet in se Christum passum; unde quidquid est effectus Dominicae Passionis, totum etiam est effectus hujus Sacramenti.* St. Thom. *In Joan. Evang.* C. vi, *lect* 6, and again: *Effectus quem Passio Christi fecit in mundo, hoc Sacramentum facit in homine.* III, q. lxxix, a. 1.

[62] Prayer for the feast of Corpus Christi.

"Certainly God knows," says St. Augustine,[63] "what we have need of, but He wills that our desire should be enkindled in prayer so that we may have a greater capacity for receiving what He prepares for us. The greater our faith, the firmer our confidence, and the more ardent our desire, so much the more shall we be capable of receiving the fruits of the Bread of life." "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," God says to us, as formerly to the Psalmist: *Dilata os tuum et implebo illud.*[64] "Open thy soul by faith, by confidence, by love, by holy desires, by abandonment to Me, and I will fill it." "With what, Lord?" "With Myself. I will give Myself to thee entirely, with My Humanity, and My Divinity, with the fruit of My mysteries, the merit of My labours, the satisfaction of My sufferings, and the price of My Passion. I will come to thee, as heretofore I came on the earth in order to destroy the works of the devil;[65] I will offer with thee Divine homage to My Father; I will give thee a share in the treasure of My Divinity, in the eternal life I hold from My Father and which My Father wills Me to communicate to thee that thou mayest resemble Me. I will fill thee with My grace so as Myself to become thy wisdom, thy sanctification, thy way, thy truth, thy life. Thou shalt be another Myself, the object, like Me, and because of Me, of My Father's delight. Open thy soul and I will fill it." *Dilata os tuum et implebo illud!*

What is needed beyond such words to make us yield ourselves up to Christ, so that His grace may take possession of us, and He may accomplish all His Will in us? And see the return Jesus Christ makes to us for what we give Him, how He increases this faith, this confidence, this love with which we receive Him! He is the Word, the eternal Word Who repeats in the depths of our heart Divine secrets and inundates us with His light, for He enlightens every man coming into the world. He is also the One Who came down on earth for our salvation, Who, in this Eucharistic union, applies the infinite merits of His death to us. What invincible assurance and what peace Jesus brings to the soul in coming to it! Not content with applying His satisfactions to us, He gives us the pledge of the future life: *Et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.*[66] Finally, He enkindles love. Love lives by union. This is truly the Sacrament of supernatural growth. Each Communion well made brings us nearer and nearer to our Model; above

[63] *Sumemus capacius quanto id et fidelius credimus, et speramus firmius et desideramus ardentius. Epist.* cxxx, c. 8. St. Augustine says this of eternal life, but it can be applied as well to the Eucharist which is the pledge of that life: *Et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.*

[64] Ps. lxxx, 11. [65] I Joan. iii, 8. [66] Antiphon of Vespers of Corpus Christi.

all, it makes us penetrate more intimately into the knowledge, the love, and the practice of the mystery of our predestination and adoption in Christ Jesus, our Elder Brother. It perfects the grace of Divine sonship in us.

There is no action wherein our faith can be exercised with greater intensity than in Communion; there is no more sublime homage of faith than to believe in Christ Whose Divinity and Humanity are both hidden under the appearances of the Host. When Christ Jesus, in showing us a little bread and wine, tells us: "This is My Body. This is My Blood," and our intelligence, putting aside all that the senses say, accepts these words of Christ; when our will leads us in faith and love to the Holy Table, to put into practice this adherence of the intelligence, then we accomplish the highest and most absolute act of faith that can be.

Eucharistic Communion is *the most perfect act of our Divine adoption.* There is no moment when we are more justly entitled to say to our Father in heaven: "O heavenly Father, I abide in Thy Son Jesus, and He abides in me. Thy Son, proceeding from Thee, receives the communication of Thy Divine life in its fulness. I have received Thy Son with faith; faith tells me that at this moment I am with Him, and since I share in His life, behold me in Him, through Him, with Him as the son in whom Thou art well-pleased." What graces, what light, what strength does not such a prayer bring to the child of God! What superabundance of Divine life, what closeness of union, what depth of adoption does not such a faith communicate to us! We here touch the culminating point, on earth, of this Divine adoption.

As to the *formulae* to help us in the immediate preparation for this union with Jesus, one cannot fix on any exclusively, the needs of souls as well as their aptitudes being so varied.

Some are accustomed to follow the prayers and movements of the priest who offers the Holy Sacrifice, and they approach the Holy Table during Mass, at the moment of the Communion. When possible, this is the best immediate preparation for receiving Christ. Why should not the faithful use the same prayers that our holy Mother the Church puts on the lips of the priest to prepare him to receive Our Lord? In thus preparing ourselves, we are united more directly to the Sacrifice of Christ and to the intentions of His Sacred Heart. Moreover, the Missal contains, as in the *Gloria in excelsis,* for example, admirable expressions of faith, confidence, and love. Others read the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, where the Apostle relates the Eucharistic

promises, and they intermingle aspirations of faith, hope, and charity with the Sacred Text. We can also nourish our devotion with Book IV of the *Imitation of Christ,* which deals especially with the Mystery of the Altar, or again, we can use the formulas contained in approved works of piety.

Each can follow, in this, the bent of his preferences, as long as the mind and heart are associated with the words pronounced by the lips, and provided that the soul enlarges its capacity of union by an intense faith, deep reverence, absolute confidence, ardent desire and love, and above all, generous abandonment to the Will of Jesus Christ. Then all is well: there is nothing further to do than to receive the Divine Gift. . . .

VII

I would leave the same latitude for the thanksgiving. Some, in silence, adore the Divine Word within them. The Humanity we receive is the Humanity of the Eternal Word. By It, we enter into communion with the Word, Who from the Bosom of the Father, *In sinu Patris,* has descended into us. The Word, by essence, belongs wholly to His Father; He holds all from Him, without, on that account, being less than His Father. But He refers all to His Father: *Ego vivo propter Patrem,* His essence is to live by His Father. When we are thus united to Jesus and give ourselves up to Him, He bears us up by the faith we have in Him even to the Holy of Holies, *Usque ad interiora velaminis.*[67] There, we may unite ourselves to those acts of intense adoration that the Sacred Humanity of Christ renders to the Blessed Trinity. We are so united to Christ at this moment that we can appropriate to ourselves the acts of the Sacred Humanity and render an extremely acceptable homage to the Eternal Father through the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself becomes our thanksgiving, our *Eucharist;* let us never forget that He supplies for all our weaknesses, for all our infirmities, all our miseries. What unlimited confidence ought not the soul to derive from Christ's Presence within her!

Again, we can lend our lips to sing the canticle of all creation which takes its life in the Word, so that all the things which were made by the Word—*Omnia ped ipsum facta sunt; et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est*[68]—may sing, in Him and by Him, to the glory of God. This is what the priest does on coming down from the altar. The Church, the Bride of Christ, who knows better than anyone the secrets of her Divine Bridegroom, makes the priest sing in the sanctuary of his soul

[67] Hebr. vi, 19. [68] Joan. i, 3.

where the Word dwells, the inward canticle of thanksgiving. The soul leads all creation to the feet of its God and its Lord, that He may receive homage from every creature: *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino.*[69] "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever. O ye Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord, O ye heavens, bless Him. . . . Sun and moon, stars of heaven, bless the Lord. . . . Showers and dew, winds and tempests, fire and flames, cold and heat, dews and rime, frost and cold, ice and snow, bless the Lord. Nights and days, light and darkness, lightnings and clouds, bless Him. . . ." The priest next invites the earth, the mountains and the hills, the plants, the seas and rivers; the fish, the birds, wild beasts and cattle; and lastly, men, priests, the holy and humble of heart, to render glory to the Holy Trinity, to Whom all honour is given through the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. What a wonderful song is that of all creation sung thus by the priest at the moment when he is united to the Eternal High Priest, the one Mediator, the Divine Word by Whom all was created!

Others, sitting, like Magdalen, at the feet of Jesus, speak to Him familiarly, listening to what He says in the depth of the soul, ready to give Him all He asks; for, at these moments when the Divine Light is in us, Jesus often shows the generous soul what He requires of it. "A sovereignly precious time," says St. Teresa, "is that hour following Communion: the Divine Master is then pleased to instruct us; let us listen to Him, and in gratitude for what He vouchsafes to teach us, let us kiss His feet, and beg Him not to leave us."[70]

We can also read slowly, as if listening to the words of Christ, the magnificent discourse after the Last Supper, when Jesus had just instituted this Sacrament: "Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? . . he that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. . . . As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love. . . . These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled . . . I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you . . . the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. . . . These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace; in the world you shall have distress, but have confidence, I have overcome the world."[71]

[69] Dan. iii, 57. [70] *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxxiv. [71] Joan. xiv and xv.

Or again, we can converse interiorly with Our Lord, as if we were at the foot of the Cross; or pray vocally by reciting the psalms which refer to the Eucharist: "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing; He hath set me in a place of pasture: He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment: He hath converted my soul . . . though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me."[72]

All these attitudes of the soul are excellent. There is no end to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. The one thing necessary is that we should recognize the greatness of the Divine Gift which St. Paul declares to be "unspeakable", and that we should draw, for our own needs and those of our brethren and of the whole Church, from this infinite treasury. For "the Father loveth the Son, and He hath given all things into His Hand": *Pater diligit Filium, et omnia dedit in manu ejus.*[73] Christ gives all in giving Himself; we too ought to give all, while repeating from the depths of our hearts, the words He Himself said: *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper,* "I do always the things that please Him";[74] or again those words of Jesus to His Father at the Last Supper, words which are the very expression of perfect union: "All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine," *Et omnia mea tua sunt, et tua mea sunt.*[75]

This is, I repeat, the fruit properly belonging to the Eucharist: the identification of ourselves, through faith and love with Christ. If, as St. Augustine admirably says, you receive well the Body of Christ, you are what you receive.[76]

Doubtless, the act itself of Communion is transitory, but the effect it produces, union with Christ the life of the soul, is, of its nature, permanent; it lasts as long and in the measure that we wish. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of life only because it is the Sacrament of union; we must abide in Jesus and Jesus in us. Do not let us, then, in the course of the day, diminish by our levity, dissipation and curiosity, by our vanity and selfseeking, the fruit of the Eucharistic reception and union. It is a Living Bread, a Bread of Life, a Bread which makes us live, that we have received. The works we ought to accomplish are the works of life, the works of a child of God, after having been nourished every day with this Divine Bread in order to

[72] Ps. xxii, 1-4.
[73] Joan. iii, 35.
[74] Ibid. viii, 29.
[75] Ibid. xvii, 10.
[76] "The virtue proper to this food is to produce unity, to unite us so closely to the Body of Jesus Christ that, having become His members, we may be that which we receive": *Virtus ipsa quae ibi intelligitur unitas est, ut redacti in Corpus ejus, effecti membra ejus simus quod accipimus. Sermo.* lvii, c. 7.

be transformed into Christ. For "he that saith he walketh in Christ, ought himself so to walk even as Christ walked."[77]

Do not let us, from want of generosity, and in order to excuse our sloth, say that we are weak. This is true, more true even than we think. But by the side of this abyss (it is one) of our weakness, which is, however, compatible with our good will—and Our Lord knows this good will better than we do—there is another abyss, that of the merits and treasures of Christ; and, by Communion, this Christ is ours.

[77] I Joan. ii, 6. This is what the Church makes us ask at the Mass of the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost: "May the offering to be dedicated to Thy Name purify us, O Lord, and carry us on from day to day, to the practice of a heavenly life."

IX. *VOX SPONSAE*

SUMMARY. The *Divine praise* forms an essential part of the sanctifying mission confided by Christ to the Church. I. *The Eternal Word, the Divine Canticle;* the Incarnation *associates humanity* with this canticle. II. *The Church charged to organize,* under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, *the public worship of her Spouse;* the use that is made of *the psalms;* how these inspired canticles *exalt the Divine perfections, express our needs* and *speak* to us *of Christ.* III. The great *power of intercession* this Divine praise has on the lips of the Bride. IV. Numerous *fruits of sanctification:* the prayer of the Church, *source of light;* it makes us *share in the sentiments* of the Soul *of Christ.* V. It likewise gives us a *share in His mysteries;* a sure and infallible way of *making us one with Jesus.* VI. Why and how *the Church honours the Saints.*

THE Holy Sacrifice in which the soul participates by sacramental communion constitutes, as we have seen, the centre of our religion; it includes in one and the same act the commemoration, renewal and application of the immolation of Calvary.

But the Mass in itself alone does not supply the place of all the religious actions we ought to accomplish; although it is the most perfect homage we can render to God and contains the substance and virtue of all homage, it is, however, not the only homage. What do we yet owe to God? The homage of prayer, at one time public, at another individual. I will speak in the next conference of private and mental prayer. Let us now see in what the homage of public prayer consists.

If you read the letters of St. Paul, you will see he exhorts us to it more than once. He writes to the Colossians telling them to teach and admonish one another "in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God."[1] And again: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father."[2] While he himself was in prison, with his companion Silas, he would rise during the night to offer to God with a glad heart praises for his sufferings and thanksgiving for his wounds:[3] *Media autem nocte Paulus et Silas orantes laudabant Deum.*[4]

[1] Col. iii, 16. [2] Ephes. v, 19-20. [3] Bossuet, *Panegyric on St. Paul.* [4] Act. xvi, 25.

This Divine praise is closely linked with the Holy Sacrifice and we see that Our Lord wished to show us this by His example. The Evangelists, in fact, tell us that Christ did not leave the Cenacle, after the institution of the Eucharist, until He had said a hymn of praise: *Hymn dicto.*[5] Public prayer gravitates towards the Sacrifice of the altar; there it finds its best support, thence it draws its greatest value in the sight of God. This is because it is presented to Him by the Church, in the name of the Bridegroom, the Eternal High Priest, Who, by His Sacrifice unceasingly renewed, has merited that all glory and honour should be rendered to the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost: *Per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso est tibi . . . omnis honor et gloria.*[6]

Let us see in what this homage of the official prayer of the Church consists, and how, whilst constituting a work most acceptable to God, it becomes for us a pure and abundant source of union with Christ and of eternal life.

I

Before ascending into Heaven, Christ Jesus bequeathed to His Church its greatest treasure—the mission of continuing His work here below.[7] This work, as you know, is two-fold: it is a work of praise in regard to the Eternal Father, a work of salvation in regard to men. The Word was made flesh for us: *Propter nos et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis.*[8] That is true; but this work of our redemption has for its cause the love of Christ for His Father: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem . . . sic facio.*[9]

The Church receives her mission from Christ: she receives the sacraments and the privilege of infallibility in order to sanctify men; but she has a part too in the religion of Christ towards His Father in order to continue upon earth the homage of praise that Christ in His Sacred Humanity offered to His Father.

Christ Jesus, in this as in all things, is our Model. Let us for an instant contemplate the Incarnate Word. Christ is the only Son of the Father; He is the Eternal Word. In the adorable Trinity, He is the Word by which the Father eternally says to Himself all that He is; He is the living expression of all the perfections of the Father the "figure of His substance," says St. Paul, and the "brightness of His glory."[10] The Father contemplates His Word, His Son; He sees in Him the perfect, substantial, living image of Himself; such is the essential glory

[5] Matth. xxvi, 30; Marc. xiv, 26.
[6] "Canon" of the Mass.
[7] See the conference on *The Church.*
[8] The Nicene Creed.
[9] Joan. xiv, 31.
[10] Hebr. i, 3.

that the Father receives. If God had created nothing, had left all things in the state of possibility, He would, however, have had His essential and infinite glory. By the very fact of being what He is, the Eternal Word is like a Divine canticle, a living canticle, singing the praise of the Father, expressing the plenitude of His perfections. It is the infinite hymn which resounds unceasingly *In sinu Patris.*

In taking a human nature, the Son remains what He was: *Quod fuit permansit;*[11] He does not cease to be the only Son, the perfect image of the perfections of the Father; He does not cease to be of Himself the living glorification of His Father. The infinite canticle, sung from all eternity, began to be sung upon earth when the Word became incarnate. By the Incarnation, humanity is, as it were, drawn by the Word into this work of glorification; the canticle sung in the sanctuary of the Divinity is prolonged by the Incarnate Word in His humanity.

Upon the lips of Christ Jesus, true Man as well as true God, this canticle takes a human expression and human accents, and likewise a character of adoration that the Word, equal to the Father, could not offer Him as such. However, if the expression of this canticle is human, its perfection is all-holy; it is of Divine price and infinite value. Who amongst us could measure the greatness of the worship Christ rendered to His Father? Who could recount something of the song of praise Christ sang in His thrice blessed soul to the glory of His Father? The soul of Christ contemplated, in a continual vision, the Divine perfections, and from this contemplation sprang forth the fulness of religion, perfect adoration and sublime praise. At the end of His earthly life, Christ Jesus declares to His Father that He has always glorified Him. This was the chief work of His life and He has perfectly fulfilled it: *Ego te clarificavi super terram: opus consummavi, quod dedisti mihi ut faciam:* "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."[12]

But it is note-worthy that in personally uniting our nature to Himself, the Word incorporated, so to speak, all humanity with Himself. He associated, by right and in principle, all humanity in the perfect praise He gives to His Father. Here again we have received of the fulness of Christ, so that, in Christ and by Christ, every Christian soul, united to Him by grace, should sing Divine praises. Christ is our Head, all the baptized are the members of His Mystical Body; in Him and through Him, we should give all glory and honour to God.

Christ has left us a share of praise to fulfil as He has given us a share

[11] Antiphon for the Feast of the Circumcision. [12] Joan. xvii, 4.

of suffering to bear. Does our adoration and praise add something to the merit or the perfection of those of Christ? Certainly not. But Christ has willed that, through the Incarnation, all humanity, of which He holds the place, should be by right indissolubly united to all His states and to all His Mysteries. Let us never forget this. He makes only one with us. He rendered His adorations and praises to His Father not only in our favour but also in our name. And that is why the Church, His mystical Body, must be associated here below with this work of religion and praise which the humanity of Christ now renders to His Father *in splendoribus sanctorum*.[13] The Church must offer, after this example of her Spouse, this "sacrifice of praise", as St. Paul calls it,[14] that is due to the infinite perfections of the Father.

II

Let us see how the Church, guided in this by the Holy Ghost, fulfils her mission. At the centre of her worship she places the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the veritable sacrifice which renews the work of our redemption on Calvary and applies the fruits of it. She accompanies this oblation with sacred ceremonies which she carefully regulates and these are like the protocol of the court of the King of kings. She surrounds it with readings, canticles, hymns and psalms which serve as preparation or thanksgiving for the eucharistic immolation.

This constitutes the "Divine Office"; you know that the Church imposes the recitation of it as a grave obligation on those whom Christ, by the sacrament of Holy Order, has made partakers of His Eternal Priesthood. As to the elements, the "formulas" of her praise, the Church composes some of them herself—as the hymns—by the pen of her doctors, who are also great saints, for example, St. Ambrose; but she principally borrows them from the books of the sacred Scriptures, the books inspired by God Himself. St. Paul tells us "we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but," he adds, "the Spirit Himself asketh for us": *Sed ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus*.[15] That is to say God alone knows the way in which we should call upon Him. This is true of the prayer of petition, but it is especially true of the prayer of praise and thanksgiving. God alone knows how He should be praised. The most magnificent conceptions of God formed by our intelligence are human. To praise God worthily, it is necessary that God Himself should compose the expression of these praises. And that is why the Church places the psalms upon our lips

[13] Ps. cix, 3. [14] Hebr. xiii, 15. [15] Rom. viii, 26.

as the most perfect praise we can, after the Holy Sacrifice, offer to God.[16]

Read the Divine pages. You will see how these canticles, inspired by the Holy Ghost, *relate, proclaim and exalt all the perfections of God.* The canticle of the Eternal Word in the Holy Trinity is simple, yet infinite; but upon the lips of creatures, incapable of comprehending the infinite, praises are multiplied and repeated. With wonderful and great variety of expression, the psalms sing by turns the power, magnificence, holiness, goodness, mercy and beauty of God.[17] "He hath done all things whatsoever He would, for He spoke and they were made: He commanded and they were created. . . . O Lord, Our Lord, how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth. . . . Thou hast made all things in wisdom. . . . The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God. . . . The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord: the heavens declared His justice and all people saw His glory. . . . May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; the Lord shall rejoice in His works. He looketh upon the earth and maketh it tremble: He touched the mountains and they smoke . . ."

And hear in what terms the psalms speak to us of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. "The Lord is faithful in all His words; He is gracious and merciful. The Lord is sweet to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. . . . The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will do the will of them that fear Him: He will hear their prayer and save them. The Lord keepeth all them that love Him. . . . Let all that is within me bless His holy name, for His mercy endureth for ever . . ." *Quoniam in aeternum misericordia ejus . . .*

These are some of the accents the Holy Ghost Himself places on our lips. Let us love to use these inspired accents to praise God; let us repeat with the psalmist: "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live." A soul that loves God feels indeed the need of praising and blessing Him and exalting His perfections; she delights in celebrating them as they merit;[18] it is a torment for her to feel herself incapable of celebrating them as is due, and that is why in the psalms we so often invite all creatures to praise God with us. "The heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declareth the works of His hands. . . . O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people." These

[16] *Ut bene laudetur Deus, laudavit seipsum Deus; et ideo quia dignatus est laudare se, inventi homo quemadmodum laudet eum.* St. Augustin. *Enarr. in Ps.* 144.

[17] So as not to overcrowd these pages with notes, we do not give here the many references to the texts we are about to quote, which are all taken from the book of Psalms.

[18] *Treatise on the Love of God,* by St. Francis of Sales. Book V, Chap. 7, 8, a. 9.

are for the soul so many acts of perfect love, of pure complacency, extremely pleasing to God.

At the same time as they celebrate the Divine perfections, the psalms *wonderfully express the sentiments and needs of our souls.* The psalms know how to weep and rejoice; to desire and supplicate.[19] There is no inward disposition of our souls they cannot express. The Church well knows our needs, and that is why, like a solicitous mother, she place upon our lips all these deep and ardent aspirations of repentance, confidence, joy, love and complacency, dictated by the Holy Ghost Himself: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy . . . against Thee only have I sinned. . . . My soul hath hoped in the Lord . . . because with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. . . . O God, come to my assistance, O Lord, make haste to help me. Let them be confounded and ashamed that seek my soul. . . . Thou art become my support and my refuge. Protect me under the shadow of Thy wings; though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me . . ." *Quoniam tu mecum es,* "Thou art with me!" What an act of confidence!

At times too we feel the need of telling God how much we thirst for Him, and how we wish only to seek after Him. Here again we find the most adequate expression of this need in the psalms. "O Lord, Thou art my glory and my salvation . . . For what have I in heaven, but Thee: and beside Thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength, Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance; at Thy right hand are delights for evermore. As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. . . . When shall I come and appear before the face of God? . . . I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear": *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua!* Where else could we find such profound accents wherewith to tell God the ardent desires of our souls? . . .

Finally, and this is the highest motive for the choice that the Church makes of the psalms, they, like all the inspired books, *speak to us of Christ.*

According to the beautiful expression of an author of the first centuries, the Law, that is to say, the Old Testament, "bore Christ in its loins": *Lex Christo gravida erat.*[20] I have shown this when speaking

[19] St. Augustin. *Enarr. in Ps.* xxx; *Sermo* III, n. 1.

[20] This text is found in a sermon attributed to St. Augustine (the cxvi of the appendix to his Works); but the substance of this sermon is from Faust de Riez. The Church gives at extract from it in the Breviary on the Vigil of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

of the Eucharist. All was symbol and figure for the Jews, says St. Paul; the reality announced by the prophets, figured by the sacrifices, symbolised by so many rites, was the Incarnate Word, and His work of redemption. And this is especially true of the psalms. You know that David, to whom many of these sacred songs refer, was the figure of the Messias, as Jerusalem, so often mentioned in the psalms, is the type of the Church. Our Lord said to His Apostles: "All things must needs be fulfilled, which are written . . . in the psalms, concerning Me."[21] These are full of Christ: His Divinity, His Humanity, many of the circumstances of His life and details of His death are clearly shown forth. "The Lord hath said unto Me: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. . . . With Thy comeliness and beauty go forth, proceed prosperously, and reign. The kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts . . . God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness; Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech . . . He shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that hath no helper . . ."

In the following accents, listen to the voice of Christ Himself speaking to us of His sorrows and humiliations: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon Me. . . . And they gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink. . . . They parted My garments amongst them; and upon My vesture they cast lots . . ." Then we hear the psalmist celebrate the triumph of the victorious Christ: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. . . . Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption . . . Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive. . . . Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in. . . . Let His name be blessed for evermore: His name continueth before the sun. And in Him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed: all nations shall magnify Him!" *Sit nomen ejus benedictum in saecula! Ante solem permanet nomen ejus: et benedicentur in ipso omnes tribus terrae: omnes gentes magnificabunt eum.*

You see how wonderfully all these words apply to Christ Jesus. During His mortal life, He certainly recited or sang these canticles composed by the Holy Ghost. He alone, indeed, could sing them with all the truth they contain about His Divine Person.

And now that, all having been fulfilled, Christ has ascended into glory, the Church has gathered up these canticles to offer them as daily praise to her Divine Bridegroom and the Holy Trinity: *Te per orbem*

[21] Luc. xxiv, 44.

terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia.[22] For she ends all the psalms in the same way by chanting: *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto:* "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," or, according to another formula: "Glory be to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end.[23] The Church wills by this to refer all glory to the Holy Trinity, the first principle and last end of all that exists. She associates herself, by faith and love, in the eternal praise that the Word renders to His Father as being the prototype of all creation.

III

But it is in Christ she finds her support. All her prayers end by recalling the titles of her Spouse: *Per Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum.* It is through Him, now seated at the right hand of His Father and reigning with Him and the Holy Spirit, that the Church claims to be heard. *Qui tecum vivit et regnat.* Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride, as St. Paul says. What is here the dowry of the Bride? It is her miseries, her weakness, but likewise her heart to love with and her lips with which to praise. And what does the Bridegroom bring? His satisfactions, His merits, His precious Blood, all His riches. Christ being united to the Church gives her His power of adoring and praising God. The Church is united to Jesus and leans upon Him. Seeing her, the Angels ask: *Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum?* "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, (but) flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?"[24] It is the Church who, from the desert of her native poverty, mounts towards God, adorned like a virgin with the glorious treasures her Bridegroom gives her. And in the name of Christ, and with Him, she offers the adoration and praise of all her children to the Heavenly Father. This praise is the voice of the Bride: *Vox Sponsae,* the voice that delights the Bridegroom. It is the canticles sung by the Church in company with Christ, and that is why, when we join in it with faith and confidence, it is so pleasing to Christ Jesus: *Vox tua dulcis;* in God's sight, it surpasses in value all our private prayers. Behold this Bride, proud of her condition and state and assured of the eternal rights gloriously won by her Divine Bridegroom, penetrating boldly into the sanctuary of the Divinity where Christ, her

[22] Hymn *Te Deum.*

[23] Cf. St. Leo, *Sermo I de Nativitate Domini: Agamus Deo gratias Patri per Filium ejus in Spiritu Sancto*

[24] Cant. viii, 5.

Head and her Bridegroom, ever lives and prays for us. Between the two, there is all the distance from earth to heaven, but the Church bridges over this distance by faith and blends her voice with that of Christ *in sinu Patris:* it is one and the same prayer, the prayer of Jesus united to His Mystical Body with whom He offers one and the same homage to the adorable Trinity. How should such a prayer fail to be acceptable to God since He receives it from Christ? What power will it not have over the Heart of God? How too could such praise fail to be a source of graces for the Church and for all her children? It is Christ Who prays, and Christ has always the right to be heard: *Pater, sciebam quia semper me audis.*[25]

See how already, in the Old Testament, the prayer of the leader of the children of Israel was all-powerful over the Heart of God; and yet this chosen people was only a figure, only a shadow of the Church. An important combat is being fought between the Hebrews and their enemies, the Amalecites.[26] The struggle lasts some time with alternate success. At one time the Israelites give way, at another time they have the upper hand. Finally the victory rests with the Hebrews. And what was the event, the fact that decided this victory? Let us suppose for an instant that those who conducted the battle had left detailed reports upon the varying fortunes of the day, and that these reports were submitted to a general of modern times in order to learn his opinion. This general would find that such or such a fault of tactics had been committed, that such or such a measure of strategy had not been realized, that such a manœuvre had failed, such an attack been badly sustained. He would give every reason except the true one. And what was that? God Himself has made known to us the reason of the alternating success and the happy issue of the combat for the Israelites. It was that, upon the neighbouring mountain, Moses, the leader of Israel, prayed with arms upraised, for his people. Each time that Moses, being out-wearied, let his arms fall, the Amalecites had the victory; each time that Moses raised his suppliant hands, the victory was on the side of the Israelites. At the end, Aaron and his companions supported the arms of Moses until the victory was won for Israel. . . . What a grand scene is that of the leader obtaining, by his prayer, the victory for his people! If we were to give this explanation ourselves, many would smile pityingly; but it is God in person Who has given it, the God of Hosts, of Whom Israel was the chosen people, and Moses the friend.[27]

[25] Joan. xi, 42. [26] Exod. xvii, 8-16.

[27] "The hands that are raised to God break through more battalions than those that strike." Bossuet, *Funeral oration on Maria Teresa of Austria.*

Doubtless this teaching is to be applied to all prayer, but with how much greater truth to the prayer of Christ, the Head of the Church, praying by the voice of the Church, for His mystical body struggling here below against "the Prince of this world"[28] and "of this darkness";[29] renewing every day upon the altar the prayer He made for us with extended arms upon the mountain of Calvary, and offering to His Father the infinite merits of His Passion and Death: *Exauditus est pro sua reverentia.*[30]

IV

This praise that the Church offers to God in the Holy Sacrifice and in the "Canonical Hours", that circle around the Mass, possesses not only power of intercession but has besides great *value of sanctification.* Why is this?

Because of the way in which the Church has disposed the liturgical cycle, public prayer becomes for our minds a source of light, of union with the sentiments of the soul of Christ and with the mysteries of His life. See, in fact, how the Church disposes the cycle of feasts during which she comes before God to celebrate His praises officially and render Him homage?

As you know, this liturgical cycle can be divided into two sections: one lasts from Advent, the season preparatory to Christmas, until Pentecost; the other comprises the Sundays after Pentecost.

The first part is essentially founded on the mysteries of Christ. The Church commemorates, in broad outline, the principal stages of the earthly life of her Spouse: during Advent, the preparation for this coming of Christ under the Old Covenant; at Christmas, His birth at Bethlehem; His Epiphany, that is to say, His manifestation to the Gentiles in the person of the Magi; Christ's presentation in the Temple; then, during Lent, His fast in the desert. Next, during Holy Week, the Church celebrates His Passion and Death; she sings His Resurrection at Easter; His Ascension; the mission of the Holy Ghost to the Apostles, and the founding of the Church.

Like a bride who holds nothing dearer than her bridegroom, the Church unfolds before her children's eyes all the events of the life of Jesus in their real succession, and even at times follows a detailed chronology, as from Holy Week to Pentecost.

If our souls are attentive, this representation will be for them *an abundant source of light.* From this vivid representation, renewed

[28] Joan. xii, 31. [29] Ephes. vi, 12. [30] Hebr. v, 17.

every year, we derive a sure and deep knowledge of Christ's mysteries.

Moreover this representation is not a simple and dry reproduction; but the Church, by the choice and arrangement of the extracts taken from the sacred books, *makes us penetrate into the very sentiments that animated the Heart of Jesus.* How can this be?

You will have already noticed that the Evangelists often give only a purely historical narration even of the most important events of Christ's life adding hardly anything of all that filled the soul of Jesus. For example, during the Passion, the Evangelist, thus recounts the Crucifixion of Jesus: *Eduxerunt Jesum in Calvariae locum, ubi crucifixerunt eum,* the soldiers "took Jesus and led Him forth to Calvary where they crucified Him."[31] It is the simple attestation of the fact; nothing more. But who will tell us the sentiments with which the soul of Jesus overflowed? It is true we are here upon the threshold of a sanctuary of which God alone knows the sacred depths; however, we would gladly know something of them, for this knowledge would bring us nearer to our Divine Model.

The Church, our Mother, raises for us a corner of the veil. You know that Christ when hanging upon the cross exclaimed: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" These words form the first verse of a messianic psalm only to be applied to Jesus, and where not only the circumstances of His crucifixion, but the thoughts and feelings which must, at this moment, have filled His blessed soul are expressed in a wonderful manner.[32] St. Augustine says explicitly that Christ upon the Cross recited this psalm which is "an anticipated gospel."[33] Read it: you will hear Our Lord, crushed beneath the weight of Divine justice, reveal His inmost anguish. "I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people. All they that saw me, have laughed me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver Him: let Him save him seeing He delighteth in him. . . . I am poured out like water, and all my bones are scattered. My heart has become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels. . . . But Thou, O Lord, remove not Thy help to a distance from me: look towards my defence . . . save me from the lion's mouth! . . ." These words are a revelation of what was passing in the Heart of Jesus in His Passion. The Church knows this well. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she makes us recite this psalm

[31] Joan. xix, 16-18. [32] Ps. xxi.

[33] *Verba psalmi volut esse sua, in cruce pendens. Enarr. in Ps.* lxxxv, c. 1. *Passio Christi tam evidenter quasi Evangelium recitatur. Enarr. in Ps.* xxi.

during Holy Week, so that our souls may share in the feelings of Christ's Heart.

So it is with the other mysteries. You will see that the Church, at the same time as she recounts and reproduces under the eyes of her children the history of the mystery, interweaves with it these psalms, these prophecies, these passages from the letters of St. Paul, wherein the sentiments of Jesus are expressed.

Thus the Church not only gives us, each year, a living representation of the life of her Bridegroom, but she makes us penetrate, as far as the creature is able to penetrate, into the soul of Christ so that, reading His inmost dispositions, we may share them and be more intimately united to our Divine Head. The Church, with profound art and wonderful ease, helps us to fulfil the precept of St. Paul: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," *Hoc enim sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu.*[34] Is not this to fulfil the very formula of our predestination?

V

This is not all. These mysteries of Christ that the Church causes us to celebrate each year are *still living mysteries.*

Place a believer and an unbeliever before the representation of the passion at Oberammergau or Nancy. The unbeliever might admire the beautiful way in which the drama is unfolded and the scenes are rendered; he would be moved from the aesthetic point of view. The influence on the believer would be yet more marked. Why? Because although he might not be struck by the artistic side of the representation, the scenes before his eyes would recall events touching his faith very closely. But, even with him, this influence would be produced only by an outward cause: the spectacle at which he assists. The representation does not contain inward extrinsic value, able of itself to touch his soul supernaturally. That belongs only to the mysteries of Christ celebrated by the Church; not that they contain grace as the Sacraments do, but these mysteries are living, they are sources of life for the soul.

Each of Christ's mysteries is not only an object of contemplation for the mind, a remembrance we evoke the better to praise God and thank Him for what He has done for us; it is something more; *each of these mysteries constitutes,* for a soul having faith, *a participation in the different states of the Incarnate Word.*

[34] Philipp. ii, 5.

And this is very important. The mysteries of Christ were first lived by Him, but in order that we may live them in our turn in union with Him. How can we do so? By being inspired with their spirit and appropriating their virtue, so that living by them we may be made one with Christ.

It is true that Christ Jesus is now glorious in heaven; His earthly life, in its physical duration and outward form, only lasted thirty three years. But the virtue of each of these mysteries is infinite and remains inexhaustible. When we celebrate them in the holy liturgy, we receive from them, according to the measure of our faith, the same graces as if we had lived with Our Lord and been present at all His mysteries.[35] These mysteries had the Incarnate Word for their author. As I have said, Christ, by His Incarnation, associated all humanity in His Divine mysteries and merited for His brethren the graces he has willed to attach to them. It is in the Church's celebration of these mysteries, since it is to her He has confided the care of continuing His mission here below, that Christ, in the course of the centuries, makes faithful souls partakers of the graces these mysteries contain. They are, says St. Augustine,[36] the type of Christian life we ought to lead as disciples of Jesus.

Thus it is for the Nativity. "In adoring Our Saviour's birth," says St. Leo, "it follows that it is our own origin we celebrate. In fact, this temporal generation of Christ is the source of the Christian people, and the birth of the Head is at the same time the birth of His mystical body. Every man, in whatever part of the world he dwells, may find through this mystery a new birth in Christ."[37] Each year Christmas brings to our souls when we celebrate this mystery with faith—for it is first of all by faith and next by Eucharistic communion that we enter into contact with the mysteries of Christ—a grace of newness of life that increases the degree in which we are made partakers of the Divine filiation in Christ Jesus.

So it is with the other mysteries. The celebration of Lent, of the Passion and Death of Jesus during Holy Week, brings with it a grace of "death to sin" helping us to destroy sin more and more within us, and all attachment to sin and to the creature. For, as St. Paul explicitly says, Christ has caused us to die and be buried with Him: *Si unus mortuus est, ergo omnes mortui sunt . . .* CONSEPULTI *enim sumus cum*

[35] See above p. 73 and the following pages.

[36] *Quidquid gestum est in cruce Christi, in sepultura, in resurrectione terita die, in ascensione in coelum, in sede ad dexteram Patris, ita gestum est ut his rebus, non mystice tantum dictis sed etiam gestis, configuraretur vita christiana quae hic geritur.* St. Augustin, *Enchiridion*, c. liii.

[37] *Serm. IV. In nativitate Domini.*

illo.[38] That is in right and principle for all, but the application of it is made, in the course of the centuries, to each of our souls by the participation we have in Christ's death, above all during the season when the Church especially recalls the remembrance of it to us.

Again at Easter, when we sing the glory of Christ coming forth from the tomb, victorious over death, we receive, by being partakers of this mystery, a grace of spiritual life and liberty. God, says St. Paul, raises us up with Christ: CON*resuscitavit nos;*[39] and he says again, speaking of the grace proper to this mystery: *Si* CON*surrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite . . . non quae super terram.*[40] "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ seek (and savour not that which is of the earth and being created contains the germ of corruption and death but) the things that are above," and which will lead you to eternal life: UT QUOMODO CHRISTUS *surrexit a mortuis per gloriam Patris,* ITA ET NOS *in novitate vitae ambulemus.*[41]

After having associated us in His Risen Life, Christ makes us share in the mystery of His Ascension. And what is the special grace of this mystery? St. Paul tells us: *Deus . . .* CON*sedere fecit nos in caelestibus in Christo Jesu.*[42] The great Apostle—who, by all these examples, wonderfully illustrates the doctrine so dear to him of our union with Christ as members of His mystical body—tells us in very explicit terms that God has made us *sit together with Christ* in the Kingdom of Heaven. An ancient author likewise writes: "Let us follow Christ to Heaven by faith and love while we are here below, so that we may follow Him thither on the day designed by the eternal promise."[43] Is not this what the Church makes us ask in the collect of this feast? *Ut qui Redemptorem nostrum in caelos ascendisse credimus, ipsi quoque mente in caelestibus habitemus.* "Grant . . . that we who believe . . . our Redeemer to have this day ascended into the heavens, may ourselves also in mind dwell amid heavenly things."

So, year by year, the Church places before our eyes the representation of the events marking the earthly life of her Spouse. She first makes us contemplate these mysteries, and each year a new light enlightens us; she discloses the inmost sentiments of the Heart of Christ, and each year we enter more deeply into them. She makes all these mysteries of our Divine Head to live again in us. She supports our prayer that

[38] Rom. vi, 4. [39] Ephes. ii, 6. [40] Col. iii, 1-2. [41] Rom. vi, 4.
[42] Ephes. ii, 4-6.
[43] *Ascendamus cum Christo interim corde, cum dies ejus promissus advenerit sequamur et corpore. Si ergo recte, si fideliter, si sancte, si pie ascensionem Domini celebramus, ascendamus cum illo et sursum corda habeamus.* This sermon, from which an extract is read in the breviary at the 2nd nocturn of the Sunday in the octave of the Ascension, is wrongly attributed to St. Augustine. The substance of it is, however, taken from the works of the great Doctor.

we may obtain the special grace proper to each of the mysteries lived by Christ; and so, by faith and love, and the imitation of our Divine Model ever placed before our eyes, we advance towards that supernatural transformation that is the end and object of union with Jesus: *Vivi ego, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.*[44] Does not all sanctity and the very form of our Divine predestination consist in this: To become so like to the Beloved Son that His life becomes ours?

Let us then be guided by the Church our Mother in this primordial devotion which is to make us share in the worship rendered by Christ to His Father. Christ has placed the celebration of these mysteries in the hands of His Bride. The prayer established by the Church is the true and authentic expression of the homage worthy of God. When the Church, knowing the secret of Jesus, prepares herself, and us with her, to celebrate Christ's mysteries it is as if we heard from heaven those words of the Canticle of Canticles: *Sonet vox tua in auribus meis; vox enim tua dulcis et facies tua decora.* "Let thy voice sound in my ears, for thy voice is sweet and thy face comely."[45] The Church is adorned with the riches of the Divine Bridegroom, she has the right to speak in His name; that is why the homage of adoration and praise she places on the lips of her children is extremely pleasing to Christ and to His Father.

This prayer of the Church is also a sure way for us. We could not take one that would lead us more directly to Christ, and make our life more one with His. The Church leads us as by the hand straight to Him. To let oneself be guided by her is an act of humility and obedience, for she has received all from Christ. *Qui vos audit me audit, qui vos spernit me spernit.*[46] It is likewise for us an infallible means of coming to know Christ, of sounding the depths of His mysteries and remaining united to Him, so as to find in Him not only a model, but the source of eternal life which He has caused to spring forth from the abundance of His merits: *Sacrificium laudis honorificabit me, et illic* ITER *quo ostendam illi salutare Dei.*[47]

VI

Besides the mysteries of Christ, the Church celebrates the *Feasts of the Saints.*

What has led the Church to keep the feasts of the Saints? That ever fruitful principle of the union existing, since the Incarnation, between Christ and His members.

[44] Gal. ii, 20. [45] Cant. ii, 14. [46] Luc. x, 16. [47] Ps. xlix, 23.

The Saints are the glorious members of Christ's mystical body; Christ is already "formed" in them; they have, "attained their plenitude" and, in praising them, it is Christ we glorify in them. "Praise Me," Christ said to St. Mechtilde, "in that I am the crown of all the saints." And the nun saw that all the beauty of the elect was nourished with the Blood of Jesus and shone with the virtues practised by Him. And in response to the Divine bidding, she praised the blessed and adorable Trinity "for having vouchsafed to be the diadem and admirable dignity of the saints."[48]

It is indeed, as you know, to the Trinity that the Church still offers up her praises in keeping the festivals of the saints. Each saint is a manifestation of Christ; each bears the features of the Divine Model, but in a special and distinct manner.[49] This is the result of the grace of Christ, and it is to the glory of this grace that the Church delights to exalt her triumphant children: *In laudem gloriae gratiae suae.*[50]

Complacency is the form the Church's piety takes towards the saints. She is proud of these legions of the elect who are the fruit of her union with Christ and already make part of the kingdom of her Spouse. She celebrates Christ in them: "O Lord, how admirable is Thy name. . . . Thou hast crowned (Thy saint) with glory and honour": *Domine Dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra. . . . Gloria et honore coronasti eum.*[51] The Church renews in them the remembrance of the joy that took possession of their souls when they entered into heaven: "Enter, good and faithful servant, into the joy of thy Lord. . . . Come, spouse of Christ, receive the crown which the Lord hath prepared for thee from all eternity . . ." She exalts the virtues and merits of her Apostles, and Martyrs, of her Pontiffs, Confessors and Virgins; she rejoices in their glory, she sets before us their example, if not always to be imitated, at least to be praised by their brethren on earth: *Si martyres sequi non vales actu, sequere affectu; si non gloria, certe laetitia; si non meritis, votis; si non excellentia, connexione.*[52]

And after having praised them, the Church recommends herself to their suffrages. Is this derogatory to the infinite power of Christ without Whom we can do nothing? Certainly not. Christ is pleased, not in diminishing His action but in extending it, to listen to the saints who are the princes of His heavenly court, and through them to give us the

[48] The Book of Special Grace.
[49] See above pp. 212-222.
[50] Ephes. i, 6. See the development of this idea in the conference *Christ the Crown of all the Saints* in our volume *Christ in His Mysteries*.
[51] Ps. viii, 2-6.
[52] St. Augustine, *Sermo* cclxxx, c. 6.

graces we ask.[53] Thus a supernatural current of exchange is established between all the members of His mystical body.

Lastly, not being able to celebrate all the saints individually, the Church reunites them at the end of the liturgical cycle in one solemn feast, the festival of All Saints, when she exhausts, as it were, her most triumphant praises.

Transporting us into Heaven, in the company of the Apostle St. John, she shows us that glorious portion of the kingdom of her Bridegroom, those legions of the elect, that "great multitude which no man could number . . . standing before the throne . . . clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands". And from their ranks rises a mighty acclamation: Glory to God, glory to the Lamb immolated for us, Who by His blood hath redeemed us out of "all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues".[54] Before this glorious vision, the Church is thrilled with joy. Hear how she calls upon her triumphant children: "Bless ye the Lord, all His elect, keep days of joy and give glory to Him. A hymn to all His saints, to the children of Israel, the people who form His court . . . this glory is to all His saints": *Benedicite Domino, omnes electi ejus; agite dies laetitiae et confitemini illi: hymnus omnibus sanctis ejus . . . gloria haec est omnibus sanctis ejus.*[55]

We too are called to share this triumph, to form the court of Christ *in splendoribus sanctorum,* to share *in sinu Patris* the glory of the Son, after having shared in His mysteries here below. Let us as a prelude to the praises of Heaven, where an eternal *Alleluia* resounds, associate ourselves as much as possible, while upon earth, with great faith and ardent love, in the prayer of the Church, the Bride of Christ and our Mother.

[53] *Haec vero nostra et sanctorum cohaerentia est, ut nos congratulemur eis, ipsi compatiantur nobis, militent pia intercessione.* St. Bernard. *Sermo V. in festo omnium sanctorum.*

[54] Apoc. vii, 9-10; v, 9.

[55] Antiphons of the Vespers for All Saints. Cf. Tob. xiii, 10; Ps. cxlviii, 14; Ps.

X. PRAYER

SUMMARY. The importance of prayer: the life of prayer is transforming. I. *Nature* of prayer: *the intercourse of a child of God with his Heavenly Father, under the action of the Holy Spirit.* II. The first element that must determine the direction of the intercourse or conversation is *the measure of the grace of Christ;* discretion to be kept in this respect; the teaching of the great masters of the spiritual life; the method is not prayer. III. Second element: *the state of the soul.* The different stages in the way of perfection characterize, in a general manner, the *different degrees* of the life of prayer. The *discursive labour* of beginners. IV. How important the *contemplation of the mysteries of Christ* is in the illuminative way; the *state* of prayer. V. The prayer of *faith; extraordinary prayer.* VI. The *dispositions* requisite to render prayer fruitful: purity of heart, recollection of mind, docility to God's will, humility and reverence. VII. How *union with Christ Jesus through faith* can alone make *the life of prayer fruitful;* the joy that is born to the soul from this life of prayer.

OUR Lord's desire to give Himself to us is so great that He has multiplied the means whereby He does so. Besides the different Sacraments, He has appointed prayer as the source of grace. As I have often said in the course of these conferences, it is true that the Sacraments produce grace by the very fact of being applied to the soul that places no obstacle to their action.

Prayer has not, of itself, an equally intrinsic efficacy. It is however no less necessary in order to obtain Divine help. We see Christ Jesus grant miracles to prayer, during His public life. A leper comes to Him: "Lord have mercy on me", and He heals him. They bring a blind man to Him. "Lord," he says, "grant that I may see." Our Lord restores his sight. Martha and Magdalen say to Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, our brother had not died." That was a prayer of impetration to which Our Lord responds by the resurrection of Lazarus.

These are temporal favours; but grace itself is granted to prayer. The Samaritan woman asks Him to give her of the living water of which He is the Source and that procures eternal life, and He reveals Himself to her as the Messias and leads her to confess her sins in order

to give her the remission of them. Upon the cross, the good thief asks Him for a remembrance, and He grants him plenary forgiveness: "This day, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Our Lord has, moreover, urged us to make this kind of impetration: "Ask and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you . . . [1] If you will ask the Father anything in My name (that is to say, making your claim through Me), He will give it you."[2] St. Paul too exhorts us "by all prayer and supplication" to pray "at all times in the Spirit".[3] You see how the vocal prayer of impetration is a powerful means of drawing down upon us the gifts of God.

It is especially of mental prayer I want to speak to you. This is a very important subject.

Mental prayer is one of the most necessary means for attaining union with God here below and being made like to Christ Jesus. The frequent contact of the soul with God, through the prayer of faith and the life of prayer, is a powerful aid towards the supernatural transformation of our souls. If prayer is well made, the life of prayer is transforming.[4]

Still more, union with God in prayer enables us to partake with more fruit of the other means which Christ has established whereby He may communicate Himself to us and make us like to Him. How can this be? Is mental prayer greater and more efficacious than the Holy Sacrifice, than the reception of the sacraments that are the authentic channels of grace? Certainly not. Each time we approach these sources we obtain from them an increase of grace and Divine life. But this increase depends, at least in part, on our dispositions.

Now prayer, the life of prayer, maintains, stimulates, animates and perfects those sentiments of faith, humility, confidence and love which together form the best predisposition for the soul to receive Divine grace in abundance. A soul given to prayer profits more from the sacraments and other means of salvation than another whose prayer is without constancy and intensity. One may recite the Divine Office, assist at Holy Mass and receive the sacraments, but if the soul does not give itself faithfully to prayer its progress will often be mediocre. Why is that? Because the principal author of our perfection and holiness is God Himself and it is prayer that keeps the soul in frequent contact with God; it establishes and, after having established, maintains, as it

[1] Matth. vii, 7. [2] Joan. xvi, 23. [3] Ephes. vi, 18.

[4] "A soul cannot flatter itself that it is the interior image of Jesus if it is not what is called a soul of prayer. The form matters little, but the thing itself is indispensable." Mgr Gay, *Instructions in the form of a Retreat*, chap. xiii.

were, a furnace in the soul. Even if the fire of love is not always active, at least it lies smouldering, and as soon as the soul is put in direct communication with the Divine life, for example, in the sacraments, this fire is enkindled as by a powerful breath, making it rise upwards and wonderfully increase. The supernatural life of a soul is measured by its union with God through Christ, in faith and love; this love must bring forth acts, but these acts, if they are to be produced in an intense and regular manner, require the life of prayer. It can be established that according to ordinary ways, our progress in Divine love practically depends on our life of prayer.

Let us then say what is the nature of prayer—what are its degrees—next, what dispositions are necessary for prayer to produce all its fruits.

There is scarcely need to tell you that I do not intend to give here a treatise upon prayer. Many excellent ones exist. I will simply touch on some essential points in relation with the central idea of these conferences: that is to say, our supernatural adoption in Christ Jesus which makes us live by His grace and His Spirit.

I

What is prayer?

We will define it as *the intercourse of the child of God with his Heavenly Father.* You will note the words "the intercourse of the child of God". I have used them designedly. Sometimes men are to be met with who do not believe in Christ's Divinity, like certain deists of the eighteenth century and such as those who instituted, at the French Revolution, the cultus of the Supreme Being and invented prayers to the "Divinity". They perhaps thought to dazzle God with these prayers which were nothing better than the vain conceits of a purely human spirit that God could not accept.

Such is not our prayer. It is not simply as creatures we speak with God, but as children with our heavenly Father coming before Him to adore and praise Him, to tell Him of our love, to learn to know His will and obtain from Him the necessary help to accomplish this will.

Undoubtedly, we can never forget our condition of creatures, that is to say, of nothingness, but the point of departure, or rather the standpoint on which we ought to place our intercourse with God is the supernatural stand-point. In other words it is our Divine sonship, our quality of children of God through the grace of Christ, that ought to determine our fundamental attitude in prayer.

Hear how St. Paul throws light on this point. "We know not what

we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings."[5] Now St. Paul says, in the same place, this Spirit Who prays for us and in us, is the Spirit of adoption that "giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God, and if sons heirs also . . . whereby we cry, Abba Father."[6] This Spirit was given to us when "the fulness of time being come, God sent His Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons."[7] Because the grace of Christ makes us the children of God, He has also sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so that we may pray to God as to a Father: *Quoniam estis filii, misit Deus Spiritum Filii sui in corda vestra.*[8] Because indeed, we "are no more strangers and foreigners", but members of God's family, built upon the foundation of which Christ Jesus is the chief corner-stone: *Ipso summo angulari lapide Christo Jesu.*[9]

Let us listen to Our Lord Himself. He came to be the "Light of the world", and His words, full of truth, tell us the way we are to follow: *Ego sum lux mundi, et via et veritas.*[10]

Seated upon the edge of Jacob's well, He speaks with the Samaritan woman.[11] This woman has just acknowledged that He Who speaks to her is a prophet, one sent by God, and at once she asks Him (it was the subject of lively contestation between her compatriots and the Jews) if God must be adored on the mountains of Samaria or at Jerusalem. And what does Christ reply? "Woman, believe Me that the hour cometh, when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, adore the Father . . . the hour cometh, and now is, *Et nunc est,* when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore Him." Note how Our Lord lays stress on the name of Father. At Samaria, as you know, false gods were adored, and that is why Christ says it is "in truth", that is to say it is the true God Who must be adored. At Jerusalem, the true God was adored, but not "in spirit"; the religion of the Jews was altogether material in its expression and in its aim. It is the incarnate Word Who inaugurates—*Et nunc est*—the new religion, that of the true God, adored in spirit, the spirit of the Divine, supernatural, and spiritual adoption, whereby we are made children of God; and that is why Our Lord insists upon this term of "Father". "The *true adorers* shall adore *the Father* in spirit and in truth." Doubtless, as we are adoptive children, and as God, while making us His children, diminishes nothing of His Divine Majesty nor of His absolute sovereignty,

[5] Rom. viii, 26. [6] Ibid. 15. [7] Gal. iv, 4-5
[8] Ibid. 6; Cfr. Rom. viii, 15; II Cor. i, 22.
[9] Ephes. ii, 20. [10] Joan. viii, 12; xiv, 6. [11] Ibid. iv, 5 sq.

we must adore Him, prostrate ourselves before Him; but it is in spirit and in truth we must adore Him, that is to say in the truth and spirit of the supernatural order whereby we are His children.

Our Lord is elsewhere still more explicit. With the Samaritan woman He has, so to speak, laid down the principle; with His disciples He gives the example. One day, says St. Luke, He was praying; "when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him: Lord, teach us to pray."[12] And what reply does Christ give? "When you pray, you shall pray thus: Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name . . ." Never forget this: Our Lord is God. As the Word, He is ever *in sinu Patris;* no one knows God except the Son; Christ, then, knows perfectly what we ought to say to God, or ask of Him, so as to be those "true adorers" for whom God seeks. He knows perfectly too in what attitude we ought to come before God in order to speak with Him and be pleasing to Him. He reveals to us that which He sees: *Unigenitus Dei Filius . . . ipse enarravit.*[13] And we must listen to what He reveals. He is the Way we must follow without fear: he who follows this way "walketh not in darkness".[14] Now what does Jesus say when He wants to teach us this science of prayer that He has declared to be so necessary that we ought always to pray: *Oportet semper orare?*[15] He begins by pointing out the title we ought to give to God before offering Him our homage, this title that is like the direction or, if you will, the tone that is to be given to the conversation, and on which we are to support our petitions—the title that denotes what the attitude of the soul should be in God's presence. And what is this title? "Our Father . . ."

We thus gather from the very lips of Christ, the beloved Son in Whom the Father is well pleased, this precious teaching that the first and fundamental disposition we must have in our relations with God is that of a child in presence of his father. Certainly, once more—and this point is not less important—this child will never forget his primitive condition of a creature fallen in sin and having within him a source of sin that is able to separate him from God: for He Who is our Father dwells in Heaven, and is likewise our God. "I ascend to My Father and to your Father: to My God and to your God",[16] said Our Lord when about to leave His apostles. That is why the child of God will always have deep reverence and great humility; he will pray that his sins may be forgiven, that he may not succumb to temptation, that he may be delivered from evil; but he will crown this humility and this reverence with unshaken confidence—for "every perfect gift

[12] Luc. xi, 1 sq.; Matth. vi, 9.
[13] Joan. i, 18. [14] Ibid. viii, 12. [15] Luc. xviii, 1. [16] Joan. xx, 17.

is from on high coming down from the Father of lights "[17]—and with a tender love, the love of a son for his father, and for a father who loves him.[18]

Prayer, then, is like the expression of our intimate life as children of God, like the outcome of our Divine sonship in Christ, the spontaneous blossoming of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And that is why it is so vital and so fruitful. The soul that gives itself regularly to prayer derives therefrom ineffable graces that transform it little by little to the image of Jesus, the Only Son of the heavenly Father. "The door," says St. Teresa, "by which graces of choice, such as those God has given to me, enter into the soul, is prayer; once this door is closed, I do not know how He could grant them to us."[19]

The soul too derives from prayer a joy resembling a foretaste of the blissful union of heaven, of that eternal heritage awaiting us. "Amen, I say to you," says Christ Jesus, "if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you . . . that your joy may be full": *Ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum.*[20]

Such is mental prayer: a heart to heart communing between God and the soul; "a communing alone with God, so as to express our love to Him by Whom we know ourselves to be loved."[21]

And this communing of the child of God with his heavenly Father is accomplished *under the action of the Holy Spirit.* God promised by the prophet Zacharias, that, under the new covenant, He would pour out upon souls the spirit of grace and of prayers: *Effundam super habitatores Jerusalem Spiritum gratiae et precum.*[22] This spirit is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, Whom God sends into the hearts of those whom he predestines to be His children in Christ Jesus. The gifts which this Divine Spirit confers on our souls on the day of baptism, by the infusion of His grace, help us in our relations with our Father in Heaven. The gift of fear fills us with reverence in presence of the Divine Majesty: the gift of piety harmonizes, with fear, the tenderness of a child towards a beloved father; the gift of knowledge places the truths of the natural order in a new light; the gift of understanding makes us penetrate into the hidden depths of the mysteries

[17] Jac. i, 17.

[18] "Carried as it were upon (the) two wings (of faith and hope), the soul takes its flight towards heaven and is raised even up to God. . . . With ardent *piety* and deep *veneration*, the soul speaks to Him in full confidence of all its needs, *as an only son might do to the most loving of fathers.*" Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part. IV, chap. i, § 3. "God commands us to come before Him, not with constraint and trembling, like a slave before his master, but to take refuge near Him in all liberty and perfect confidence like a child with his father." Catech. of the Council of Trent, Part. IV, chap. ii, § 2.

[19] *Life by herself,* chap. viii.

[20] Joan. xvi, 24.

[21] St. Teresa, *Life by herself,* chap. viii.

[22] Zach. xii, 10.

of faith; the gift of wisdom gives us the relish, the affective knowledge of revealed truths. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are very real dispositions which we do not take enough into account. It is by these gifts that the Spirit, Who dwells in the soul of the baptized as in a temple, helps and guides us in our intercourse with the Heavenly Father: *Spiritus adjuvat infirmitatem nostram . . .* IPSE *postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus.*[23]

The essential element of prayer is the supernatural contact of the soul with God whence it imbibes that Divine life that is the source of all holiness. This contact is produced when the soul, raised by faith and love, supported by Jesus Christ, yields itself to God, to His will, through the movement of the Holy Spirit: *Sapiens cor suum tradidit ad vigilandum diluculo ad Dominum qui fecit illum, et in conspectu Altissimi deprecabitur.*[24] No reasoning, no purely natural effort, can produce this contact: *Nemo potest dicere: Dominus Jesus, nisi in Spiritu Sancto.*[25] This contact is produced in the darkness of faith, but it fills the soul with light and life.

Prayer is, then, the expression, under the action of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, of the sentiments that result from our Divine adoption in Jesus Christ; and that is why it is accessible to every baptized soul of good will. Moreover, Christ Jesus invites all His disciples to tend to perfection, so that they may be worthy children of the heavenly Father: *Estote ergo vos perfecti, sicut et Pater vester caelestis perfectus est.*[26] Now perfection is only practically possible if the soul lives by prayer. Is it not therefore evident that Christ has not willed that the manner of treating with Him in prayer should be difficult or beyond the capacity of the most simple souls that sincerely seek Him? This is why I have said mental prayer may be defined as the intercourse or conversation of a child of God with his Heavenly Father: *Sic orabitis: Pater noster qui es in caelis.*

II

In a conversation, one both listens and speaks. The soul gives itself up to God, and God communicates Himself to the soul.

To be able to listen to God and receive His light, it is enough if the heart is filled with faith, reverence, humility, ardent confidence and generous love.

[23] Rom. viii, 26. "The Holy Spirit is the very soul of our prayers: He inspires them and makes them always acceptable." Catech. of the Council of Trent, Part. IV, ch. i, § 7.

[24] Eccli. xxxix, 6. [25] I Cor. xii, 3. [26] Matth. v, 48.

In order to speak to God, it is necessary to have something to say to Him. What is to be the subject of the conversation? That depends principally on two elements: *the measure of grace* that Christ Jesus gives to the soul, and *the state of the soul* itself.

The first element to be taken into account is the measure of the gifts of grace communicated by Christ: *Secundum mensuram donationis Christi.*[27] Christ Jesus, being God, is absolute Master of His gifts; He dispenses grace to the soul as He wills; He pours His light into us as it pleases His Sovereign Majesty. By His Spirit, Christ guides and draws us to His Father. If you read the masters of the spiritual life, you will see they have always religiously respected the sovereignty of Christ in the dispensation of His favours and lights. That explains their extreme reserve when they have to intervene in the relations of the soul with God.

St. Benedict, who was a great contemplative, favoured with extraordinary graces of prayer, and was a past-master in the knowledge of souls, exhorts his disciples to give themselves frequently to prayer: *Orationi frequenter incumbere;*[28] he makes it clearly understood that the life of prayer is absolutely necessary in order to find God. But, when it concerns regulating the manner of giving one's self to it, he is singularly discreet. He naturally supposes one has already acquired a certain habitual knowledge of Divine things from the assiduous reading of the Holy Scriptures and the works of the Fathers of the Church. Concerning prayer, he contents himself first of all with pointing out what ought to be the attitude of the soul when approaching God, namely, profound reverence and humility.[29] He wills that the soul should remain in God's presence in a spirit of great compunction and perfect simplicity; this is the best attitude in which to listen to the voice of God with profit. As to mental prayer itself, beyond linking it closely with the psalmody (of which it is, as it were, only the interior prolongation), St. Benedict makes it consist of short and fervent aspirations of the heart towards God. Repeating the counsel of Christ,[30] he says we ought to avoid multiplicity of words; our prayer ought to be short unless prolonged under the prompting of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul by grace. We do not find anything more formally laid down on this subject by the legislator of the monastic life.

Another great master of the spiritual life, arrived at a high degree of contemplation and full of the lights of grace and experience—St. Ignatius of Loyola—has written some words of which we cannot too

[27] Ephes. iv, 7. [28] *Rule,* chap. iv.

[29] It is remarkable that the patriarch of monks entitles the chapter on prayer: *De reverentia orationis.* "Of Reverence at Prayer." *Rule,* chap. xx.

[30] Matth. vi, 7.

much weigh the deep wisdom. "For each one," he writes to St. Francis Borgia, "that meditation is the best in which God communicates Himself the most. For God knows and sees what is most suitable for us, and, knowing all, He Himself points out to us the way to be followed. But we first have to grope dimly, before finding this way which will lead us to the life that has no end where we shall enjoy the most holy gifts of God."[31] The saint teaches, then, that the care of showing to each soul the best manner of speaking with Him must be left to God.

St. Teresa, in different places in her *Works,* expresses the same thought: "Whether a soul gives herself much or little to prayer, it is extremely important not to constrain her too much, nor to hold her, as it were, chained up in a corner."[32]

St. Francis of Sales is not less reserved. Hear what he says. The text is a little long, but it well characterizes the nature of prayer—the fruit of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—and the discretion necessary to regulate it: "Do not suppose, my daughters, that prayer is a work of the human mind; it is a special gift of the Holy Spirit, raising the powers of the soul above their natural strength, so that they may be united to God by sentiments and communications that all the discourses and wisdom of men cannot produce without Him. The ways by which He leads the saints in this exercise (the most Divine employment of a reasonable creature) are wonderful in their diversity; and they are all to be honoured, since it is to God they bring us and under the guidance of God; but we must not be anxious to follow them all, nor even to choose any of them of our own impulse; the important point is to discover what is the attraction of grace for us and to be faithful to it."[33]

Such testimonies could be multiplied, but these are enough to show that much as the masters of the spiritual life urge souls to give themselves to prayer—for it is a vital element of spiritual perfection—so too do they take care not to impose indiscriminately upon every soul one way rather than another. We say "impose"; they praise or recommend certain ways; they suggest or propose particular methods: all have their value which it is well to know, all have their utility which can be experienced; but to wish to impose indifferently on every soul one exclusive method would be not to take into account either the Divine

[31] *Etudes,* 1905, i, pp. 567-68.

[32] *The Interior Castle:* First Mansion, chap. ii. See also her *Life by herself,* chap. xii and chap. xiii. She writes: "God leads souls by many roads, many different paths." See also chapters xviii and xxvii in which she shows what an excellent prayer it is to keep in Our Lord's company in His different mysteries and speak with Him in simple colloquies.

[33] *Abrégé de l'espirit intérieur des religieuses de la Visitation,* expliqué par St. François et recueilli par Mgr Maupas. Rouen, Cabut, 1744, pp. 68-69.

liberty with which Christ Jesus distributes His grace, nor the attractions placed in us by His Spirit.

As for the matter of method, what helps one soul may be a hindrance to another. Experience shows that many souls that have facility in speaking habitually and simply with God and gain much good from this intercourse, would be impeded if one tried to tie them down to such or such a method. It is then for each and every soul to study for themselves first of all what is the best manner for them of conversing with God. They should, on the one hand, consider their aptitudes, their dispositions, tastes, aspirations, and kind of life, and seek to know the attraction of the Holy Spirit, besides taking into account the progress they have made in spiritual ways. On the other hand, they should be generously docile to the grace of God and the action of the Holy Spirit. Once the best way is found, after some inevitable trials at the beginning, they should keep faithfully to it, until the Holy Spirit draws them into another way. This is, for them, the condition of gaining fruit from their prayers.

Another point I consider important and one very closely connected with the preceding, is not to confound the essence of prayer with the methods, whatever these may be, that are used in making mental prayer. Some souls think that if they do not use such or such a method, they are not praying, a mistake which cannot be without danger in its consequences. Having bound up the essence of prayer with the use of some special method, they dare not change the method, even when they have recognized that it is an obstacle for them or has become useless; or even, which most often happens, finding the method wearisome, they relinquish it and, at the same time, relinquish the prayer itself, and this to their great detriment. Method is one thing, prayer another. The method ought to vary according to the aptitudes and needs of souls, while prayer (I am speaking of ordinary prayer) remains substantially always the same for every soul—an intercourse in which the child of God pours out his soul before the Heavenly Father, and listens to Him in order to please Him. The method, by sustaining the mind, helps the soul in its union with God; it is a means, but ought not to be, nor to become, an obstacle. If such a method enlightens the intelligence, warms the will, leads it to yield itself to the Divine guidance, and to pour itself out before God, then it is good; but it should be abandoned when it really fetters the attraction of the soul, constrains us, and does not help us to make any progress in the spiritual way; or, on the contrary, when it has become useless in consequence of the progress already made.

III

The second element necessary to be taken into account in order to fix the habitual subject of our intercourse with God, is *the state of the soul.*

The soul is not always in the same state. As you know, ascetic tradition distinguishes three stages or states of perfection—the purgative way, or that of beginners; the illuminative way, where the fervent advance; and the unitive way, belonging to perfect souls. These states are thus named according as such or such a characteristic predominates, although not exclusively: here, the labour of purifying the soul; there, its illumination; lastly, its state of union with God. It goes without saying that the habitual nature of prayer varies according to the stage the soul is in.[34] Therefore, reservation made of the attraction of the Holy Spirit,[35] and of the aptitudes of the soul, a beginner in spiritual ways ought to try to acquire the habit of mental prayer by personal effort. Although the Holy Spirit helps us powerfully in our relations with our Heavenly Father, His action is not produced in the soul independently of certain conditions resulting from our nature. The Holy Spirit leads us according to our nature. We are intelligence and will, but we only will the good we know; affection is only felt towards the good shown by the intelligence. In order to attach ourselves fully to God—and is not that the best fruit of prayer?—we must therefore know God as perfectly as possible. That is why, says St. Thomas, "all that renders faith true is ordered towards charity."[36]

At the beginning, then, of its seeking after God, the soul ought to store up intellectual principles and knowledge of our faith. Why? Because, without that, one will not know what to say and the prayer will degenerate into vague reverie, without depth or fruit, or else will become an exercise full of weariness that the soul will soon abandon. This knowledge has first of all to be stored up; then, afterwards, maintained, renewed and increased. How is this to be done? By applying oneself for some time, with the aid of a book, to prolonged reflection on some point of Revelation. The soul consecrates a period, longer or shorter according to its aptitudes, to considering in detail the chief articles of faith. The result is that, in these suc-

[34] We will take up this point again at greater length in another series of conferences; the little we say here will however suffice to make our meaning clear.

[35] It is recounted in the Life of St. Teresa that a young novice was so forestalled by Divine grace that from the first days of her religious life, she received the gift of contemplation. *History of St. Teresa,* by the Bollandists.

[36] In Epist. i. *St. Pauli ad Timoth.* cap. i, lect. 2a.

cessive reflections, the necessary notions are gained that serve as a point of departure for prayer.

This purely discursive work ought not to be confounded with prayer. It is only the introduction, useful and necessary to enlighten, guide, render pliant or sustain the intelligence, but an introduction all the same. Prayer only really begins at the moment when the will, set on fire with love, enters supernaturally into contact with the Divine Good, yielding itself lovingly to God in order to please Him and fulfil His precept and desire. It is in the heart that prayer essentially dwells. It is said of the Blessed Virgin that she kept the words of Jesus *In corde suo,* " in her heart."[37] When Our Lord taught His apostles to pray, He did not bid them apply themselves to such or such reasoning, but to tell the love of their hearts as children; *Sic orabitis: Pater noster . . . sanctificetur nomen tuum.* St. Augustine says that the petitions Christ has instructed us to make are the model of what the desires of our hearts should be.[38] A soul—we are here only making a supposition—that would regularly confine itself to the work of intellectual reasoning, even on matters of faith, would not be applying itself to prayer.[39] This is why some are to be met with, even among beginners, who reap more fruit from a simple reading, interspersed with affections and aspirations of the heart, than from an exercise where the reason enters almost exclusively into play. But in order to guard against the illusions of sloth, the soul ought necessarily to be aided by the counsels of an enlightened director.

IV

Nevertheless it is a fact proved by experience that the more a soul advances in spiritual ways, the more the discursive work of reasoning is

[37] Luc. ii, 51.

[38] *Verba quae Dominus Noster Jesus Christus in oratione docuit forma est desideriorum.* St. Aug. *Serm.* lvi, c. 3.

[39] This is what the Abbé Saundreau, whose ascetic works are well known, has written on this subject [the phrase between brackets is ours]: " Let us note well that the petition is the chief part of prayer, or rather prayer only begins with this. As long as the soul does not turn towards God to speak to Him [to praise Him, to bless and glorify Him; to delight in His perfections, to make supplication and yield itself to His guidance] it may, it is true, meditate, but it is not applying itself to mental prayer. We see people sometimes mistaken in this and, in an exercise of half an hour, pass *all* their time *reflecting* without saying anything to God. Even when they have added holy desires and generous resolutions to these reflections, still that is not praying. Doubtless, the mind has not been acting alone, the heart is enkindled with ardour and borne along to what is good, but it does not pour itself out into the Heart of God. Such meditations are almost fruitless, they very quickly bring fatigue and very often also discouragement and the relinquishment of this holy exercise." *The Degrees of the Spiritual Life,* see also R. P. Schrijvers, C. SS. R. *La bonne volonte,* II part, chap. I. *L'Oraison.*

reduced. Why is this? Because the soul is now filled with the knowledge of Christian truths. It is no longer needful to store up notions of faith. These have already been gained. There is nothing more to do but maintain and renew them by the reading of holy books.

It follows that long considerations are far less necessary to one all permeated with Divine truths; such a soul possesses all the material elements of prayer and can now enter into contact with God without discursive labour. This law of experience naturally allows of exceptions that must be carefully respected. There are some far advanced in spiritual ways who can never enter into prayer without the help of a book; reading serves to put them in the right atmosphere for prayer; it would be a mistake for them to do without it. There are others who can only commune with God through vocal prayer; they would be ill at ease if led into another way. However, as a general rule, it remains true that in the same measure that one progresses in the light of faith and in fidelity, the action of the Holy Ghost increases within the soul, and there is ever less need of having recourse to reasoning in order to find God.

This is above all true as experience shows, of those whose knowledge of Christ's mysteries is deeper and more extensive. Listen to what St. Paul wrote to the early Christians. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly," *Verbum Christi habitet abundanter in cordibus vestris.*[40] The great Apostle desires this in order that the faithful may teach one another "in all wisdom". But this exhortation is of value too for our own intercourse with God. Why so?

The word of Christ is contained in the Gospels which, with the letters of St. Paul and St. John, are the most supernatural, because they are inspired, exposition of Christ's mysteries. The child of God therein finds the best title to his Divine adoption and the Model he has to imitate. Christ Jesus shows Himself to us in His earthly existence, in His doctrine, in His love. We there find the best source of the knowledge of God, of His nature, His perfections and His works. *Illuxit in cordibus nostris, in facie Christi Jesu.*[41] Christ is God's great Revelation to the world. God tells us: "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him": *Ipsum audite.* It is as if He said to us: If you wish to please Me, look at My Son; look at My Son, imitate Him; I ask nothing besides this, for in this is your predestination that you be conformed to My Son.

Look at Our Lord and contemplate His actions; that is the most direct way of knowing God. To see Him is to see His Father; He is only one with His Father; He only does what is pleasing to His Father.

[40] Col. iii, 16. [41] II Cor. iv, 16.

Each of His actions is the object of His Father's complacency and we should delight in making it the object of our contemplation.

"Were you at the summit of contemplation," writes St. Teresa, "take no other road than that of regarding the holy Humanity of Jesus. One walks with assurance along that road. Our Lord is for us the source of every good; He Himself will teach us. Look at His life; He is the best Model." And the saint adds: "If instead of taking the habit of having (in prayer) this holy Humanity ever present before us—and would to God it was ever present—we purposely and deliberately do precisely the contrary, once again that is what I disapprove of. To act thus is to walk on air, as they say. And in fact, however full of God a soul may believe itself to be, it lacks a point of support. Being men, it is very advantageous to us, as long as we are in this life, to consider God made man."[42]

But Christ has not only acted. He has also spoken: *Caepit facere et docere.*[43] All His words reveal the Divine secrets to us. He only speaks of that which He beholds; and His words, as He Himself tells us, are for us "spirit and life"; they contain life for the soul, not in the manner of the sacraments, but they bear with them the light that enlightens and the strength that sustains. The actions and words of Jesus are for us motives of confidence and love and principles of action.

That is why the words of Christ ought to "abide" in us so as to become in us principles of life; that is the reason too why it is useful for the soul that desires to live by prayer to read the Gospels constantly, and to follow the Church, our Mother, when she represents to us the actions and recalls the words of Jesus in the course of the liturgical cycle. In making all the stages of the life of Christ, her Bridegroom and our Elder Brother, pass before our eyes, the Church supplies us with abundant food for prayer. A soul that thus follows Our Lord step by step possesses, presented by the Church, the material elements necessary for prayer; it is there the faithful soul finds above all the "Word of God", and, being united to Him by faith, it brings forth supernatural fruit. For the least word of Jesus Christ is for the soul a light, and a source of life and peace.

It is the Holy Spirit Who makes us understand these words and all that they contain for each one. What did Jesus say to His apostles before ascending into Heaven? "The Holy Ghost Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you": *Suggeret vobis*

[42] *Life by herself*, chap. xxii. This magnificent chapter should be read through; it will be seen in what bitter terms the great contemplative deplores having, during a long time, excluded from her prayer the contemplation of the Humanity of Christ Jesus.

[43] Act. i, 1.

omnia quaecumque dixero vobis.[44] That promise is ever being fulfilled, for Christ's words do not pass away. Christ, the Incarnate Word, together with His Father, gave us His Spirit on the day of our baptism, which made us children of the heavenly Father and Christ's own brethren. This Spirit abides in us. *Apud vos manebit et in vobis erit.*[45] And what does He do in us, this Divine Spirit, the Spirit of Truth? He brings to our mind the words of Jesus. Our Lord Himself tells us so. What does this mean? It means that when we contemplate the actions and mysteries of Christ Jesus, either in reading the Gospel or a "Life" of Our Lord, or when, under the Church's guidance, in the course of the liturgical year, one day it happens that some word, such as we have many times read and re-read without its having particularly struck us, suddenly stands out in supernatural relief in a way we have not hitherto known. It is a flash of light that the Holy Spirit makes all at once to rise from the depth of the soul; it is like the sudden revelation of a source of life hitherto unsuspected, like a new and wider horizon that opens out before the eyes of the soul; it is like a new world that the Spirit discovers to us. He, Whom the liturgy names "the finger of God" *Digitus Dei*,[46] engraves this Divine word on the soul, there ever to remain a light and principle of action; if the soul is humble and attentive, this Divine Word works therein, silent but fruitful.

When we are every day faithful to consecrate a time, longer or shorter according to our aptitudes and duties of state, in speaking with our Heavenly Father, in gathering up His inspirations and listening to what the Holy Spirit "brings to mind", then the words of Christ, the *Verba Verbi*, as St. Augustine calls them, go on multiplying, inundating the soul with Divine Light and opening out in it fountains of life so that the soul's thirst may be ever assuaged. In this is realized the promise of Christ Jesus: that if any man should thirst, and come to Him and drink there should spring up within him that believeth "rivers of living water". And St. John adds: "This He said of the Spirit which they should receive, who believed in Him."[47]

The soul, in return, constantly expresses itself in acts of faith, repentance, compunction, confidence, love, complacency and submission to the will of the heavenly Father. It moves in an atmosphere that maintains it more and more in union with God. Prayer becomes its breath, its life; it is filled with the spirit of prayer. Prayer then becomes a *state*, and the soul can find its God at will, even in the midst of many occupations.

[44] Joan. xiv, 26. [45] Joan. xiv, 17. [46] Hymn. *Veni Creator*. [47] Joan. vii, 37-38.

The moments in the day that the soul consecrates exclusively to the formal *exercise* of prayer are only the intensifying of this state in which it remains habitually, but gently, united to God, speaking to Him interiorly and listening to the voice from on high.

This state is more than the simple presence of God. It is an intimate intercourse, full of love, in which the soul speaks to God, sometimes with the lips, most often from the heart, and remains intimately united to Him, despite the variety of the day's work and occupations. There are many souls, simple and upright, who, faithful to the attraction of the Holy Spirit, reach this desirable state.

"Lord, teach us to pray! . . ."

V

Soon, however, in the same measure as the soul draws near to the Supreme Good, it shares the more in the Divine simplicity. In meditation, we form a conception of God for ourselves by means of what we learn from reason and Revelation; in the measure we advance in the supernatural life, these conceptions become simpler, but these conceptions are not God. Where are we to find God as He really is? In pure faith. Faith is for our souls, during this life, what the Beatific Vision will be in heaven where we shall see God, face to face.

Faith reveals to us God's incomprehensibility; when we arrive at seeing that God infinitely surpasses all our conceptions, then we have arrived at the point where we begin to understand what God is. The conceptions we have of God, although they be only analogical, manifest to us however something of the Divine *perfections* and *attributes;* in the prayer of faith, the soul understands that the Divine *essence,* in itself, in its transcendant simplicity, is nothing that the intelligence, even with the help of the Revelation, can represent to us.[48] From the eye of the soul has been taken away all that the sense, imagination, even the intelligence, up to a certain point, represented to it. It rests where God is shown by pure faith.

The soul has progressed, has passed successively through the sphere of the senses and imagination, of intellectual notions and revealed symbols, and has reached the veil of the Holy of holies. It knows God is hidden behind that veil as in the darkness; it almost touches Him, but does not see Him. In this state of the prayer of faith, the soul remains recollected in God, feeling united to Him in spite of the darkness that the beatific light alone will dispel; it tastes, without varying

[48] St. Thom. I, q. xiii, a. 2, ad. 3.

much of its affections, the sweetness of resting there before God: *Sub umbra illius quem desideraveram sedi, et fructus ejus dulcis gutturi meo.*[49]

That is the beginning of the prayer of quiet; it can be affirmed that many souls, faithful to grace, attain to it. When this kind of prayer has taken strong hold in a soul, the soul finds in this most simple adherence of faith, in this embrace of love, the courage, the inward elevation, the liberty of heart, humility before God, and submission to His will, that are so necessary in this long pilgrimage towards the holy mountain, towards the fulness of God: *Aliud est*, says St. Augustine, *sermo multus, aliud diuturnus affectus.*[50]

Then, if it pleases the Supreme Goodness, God leads the soul beyond the common frontiers of the supernatural so as to give Himself to it in mysterious communications where the natural faculties, raised by the Divine action, receive, under the influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—notably the gifts of understanding and wisdom—a higher mode of operation. Mystic writers describe the different degrees of these Divine operations which are sometimes accompanied by extraordinary phenomena, such as ecstasy.[51]

We can in nowise reach such degrees of prayer and union with God by our own efforts. They depend solely on the free and supreme Will of God. May we, however, desire them?

Not, if it concerns the accidental phenomena that may accompany contemplation such as ecstasy, revelations, stigmata; that would be presumption and temerity.

But if it concerns what is the very substance itself of contemplation, that is to say the most pure, simple and perfect knowledge which God gives us therein of Himself and His perfections, and the intense love the soul derives from this knowledge, then, I would say to you, desire with all your strength to possess a high degree of prayer and to enjoy perfect contemplation. For God is the principal author of our sanctity; He acts powerfully in these communications, and not to desire them would be not to desire to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind and our whole strength.[52]

And then, what is it that gives to our life all its value, that determines for our part—reservation made of the Divine action—the degree of holiness to which we are to attain? It is, as I have said, the purity and

[49] Cant. ii, 3. [50] Epist. cxxx, c. 19.

[51] Our readers will know well the recent excellent works, *The Mystical State* by the Abbé Saudreau, *Graces of Prayer* by R. P. Poulain, S. J., *The Contemplation or the Principles of Mystical Theology*, by R. P. Lamballe, *The Ways of Mental Prayer*, by Dom Lehodey. [52] Marc. xii, 30.

intensity of the love with which we pass through this life and perform our actions. Now, beyond the direct action of the sacraments, this purity and intensity of charity come to us abundantly in prayer, and that is why it is so useful for us; that, too, is why we may legitimately desire to attain a high degree of prayer.

It is clear, however, that we ought to subject this desire to the will of God. He alone knows what is best for our souls; and while sparing neither our efforts to remain generously and humbly faithful to present grace, nor our ardent aspirations towards higher perfection, it is extremely important to keep always in peace, assured as we are of God's goodness and wisdom in regard to each one of us.

VI

Now returning to the subject of ordinary prayer, it remains for me to speak of the *dispositions* of heart we must bring to it so as to render it fruitful.

To have intercourse with God, it is first of all necessary to *be detached from creatures*. We cannot fittingly speak to our heavenly Father if creatures occupy the imagination, the mind and above all the heart. Purity of soul is extremely necessary. It is an indispensable remote preparation.

Moreover, we must *be recollected*. A light, dissipated soul, one habitually distracted and making no effort to repress the wanderings of the imagination, will never be a soul of prayer. During prayer itself, we ought not to disturb ourselves about the distractions we may happen to have, but remain faithful, and lead the mind gently back without violence, by the aid of a book if needful, to the subject that should be occupying us.

Why is this outward solitude, and this interior detachment, so necessary for prayer? Because as I have said, repeating the words of St. Paul, it is the Holy Spirit Who prays in us. Now His action in the soul is extremely delicate; we ought in nothing to act in opposition to it, which St. Paul calls "grieving the Holy Spirit of God";[53] if we do so, this Divine Spirit will become silent. But we must, whilst yielding ourselves to Him, put away every obstacle opposed to the liberty of His operations. We ought to say: *Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus*.[54] "Speak, O Divine Master! speak to my soul, and grant that my soul may hear." But we can only hear this voice well in the silence of the soul.

[53] Ephes. iv, 30. [54] I Reg. iii, 10.

We must especially be in that general and fundamental disposition of refusing nothing God may ask of us, and, following Our Lord's example, of being ready to do all that pleases His Father. *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper.*[55] This is an excellent disposition because it yields the soul to the fulfilling of the Divine will. When we say to God in prayer: "Lord, Thou art infinitely good and perfect, Thou alone dost merit all love and all glory. I give myself to Thee, and because I love Thee, I embrace Thy holy will," then the Divine Spirit shows us some imperfection to be corrected, some sacrifice to be made or a good work to be done; and our love will lead us to exterminate all that is displeasing in the sight of our Father in Heaven and will carry us on to the fulfilment of His good pleasure.

This disposition must furthermore be one of profound reverence in presence of our Father's majesty: *Patrem immensae majestatis.*[56] We are adopted children; of ourselves, we remain creatures. God, even when He communicates Himself intimately to the soul, remains God, that is to say, the infinitely Supreme Being: *Dominus universorum.*[57] Adoration is an essential movement of the soul when we come before God. *Pater tales quarit qui adorent eum in spiritu et in veritate.* Note the alliance between the two terms: *Pater . . . adorent;* we become children of God, but we remain creatures.

God, moreover, wills that, by this humble and deep reverence, we should acknowledge our powerlessness; in prayer, He subjects the giving of His graces to this acknowledgment which is at the same time an act of homage to His power and goodness. *Resistit superbis, humilibus autem dat gratiam.*[58] "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." And you know how in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, Our Lord impresses this truth on us.

This humility ought to be the greater in a soul that has offended God by sin. The attitude of the soul must then reveal that inward compunction that makes us regret our sins and prostrate ourselves at Our Lord's feet like Magdalen the sinner.

However, despite our past sins and present miseries, we are able to approach very near to God. How can we do so? Through Our Lord. "God is so great, so holy, so perfect," you may say. That is true. Of ourselves we are far from God, but Christ Jesus has "made us nigh", *Facti estis prope in sanguine Christi.*[59] "I am so poor and miserable!" That too is certain, but Christ makes us rich with His own riches with which to come before His Father. "My soul has been so stained!" But the Blood of Jesus has washed it and restored all its beauty. It

[55] Joan. viii, 29.
[56] Hymn *Te Deum.*
[57] II Mach. xiv, 35.
[58] Jac. iv, 6.
[59] Ephes. ii, 13.

is Christ Who supplies for our misery, our unworthiness. We must lean upon Him in prayer. By His Incarnation, He has filled up the distance that separates man from God.

VII

This point is of such importance for every soul aspiring to the life of prayer, that I want to insist on it.

You know that between God and us, between the Creator and the creature the gulf is infinite. "I am Who am," the Being subsisting by Myself: *Ego sum qui sum.*[60] Every other being is taken out of nothingness. Who is going to throw a bridge across this gulf? Christ Jesus. He is pre-eminently the Mediator, the Pontiff. It is through Jesus Christ alone we can be raised up to God. The Incarnate Word tells us decisively: *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me.*[61] "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me." It is as if He said: "You will never attain to the Divinity save in passing through My Humanity." Never forget He is the Way, the only way. Christ alone, God and Man, raises us up to His Father. We here see how important it is to have a living faith in Christ Jesus. If we have this faith in the power of His Humanity, as being the Humanity of a God, we shall be assured that Christ can make us enter into contact with God. For, as I have often told you, the Word in uniting Himself to human nature, has, in principle, united us all to Himself. And if we are united to Him by grace, Christ bears us with Him *In sancta,*[62] as St. Paul says, into "the Holy of holies," the sanctuary of the Divinity where, as Word, He is before all ages: *Et Verbum erat apud Deum.*[63]

Through Christ we have become God's children: *Misit Deus Filium suum ut adoptionem filiorum reciperemus;*[64] it is likewise through Christ and united with Christ that we truly act as children of God and fulfil the duties proceeding from our Divine adoption. Consequently, we ought never to begin our prayer without uniting ourselves, in intention and heart, to Our Lord and without asking Him to introduce us into the Father's presence. We must join our prayers to those He made here below when upon earth, especially to that sublime prayer which as Mediator and Pontiff He unceasingly continues in Heaven for us, *Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis.*[65]

See how Our Lord has sanctified our prayers by His example. *Erat pernoctans in oratione Dei.*[66] St. Paul tells us that this Divine

[60] Exod. iii, 14. [61] Joan. xiv, 6. [62] Hebr. ix, 12. [63] Joan. i, 1.
[64] Gal. iv, 4-5. [65] Hebr. vii, 25. [66] Luc. vi, 12.

High Priest, "in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications."[67] *Species tibi datur, forma tibi praescribitur, quam debes aemulari,* "O Christian, here is a model presented to thee that thou mayest imitate it," says St. Ambrose,[68] when speaking of the prayer of Christ. Jesus prayed for Himself when He asked His Father to glorify Him: *Clarifica me, tu, Pater;*[69] He prayed for His disciples, not that they should be taken out of the world but that they should be kept from evil, for they belonged, through Him, to the Father: *Quia tui sunt;*[70] He prayed for all of us who believe in Him: *Non pro eis tantum rogo, sed et pro eis qui credituri sunt in me.*[71]

Christ Jesus has, moreover, given us that wonderful formula of prayer wherein is contained all that a child of God can need to ask of his Father in Heaven. O Father, "hallowed be Thy name", may I act in all things for Thy glory, may that be the chief motive power of all my actions; "Thy kingdom come", in me, in all whom Thou hast created; be truly the Master and King of my heart. In everything, pleasant or painful, "Thy will be done!" May I be able to say, like Thy Son Jesus, that I live for Thee. . . .

All our prayers, says St. Augustine, ought to refer in their substance to these acts of love, to these supplications, these most pure desires that Christ Jesus, the beloved Son, has placed upon our lips and that His Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, repeats in us.[72] The *Pater Noster* is essentially the prayer of a child of God.

Not only has Our Lord sanctified our prayers by His example; not only has He given us the model of them, but He also supports them by His power with God, a Divine, infallible power, for our High Priest has always the right to be heard: *Exauditus est pro sua reverentia;*[73] He Himself tells us that all we ask the Father in His name, that is to say in making our petition through Him, shall be given to us.

When, therefore, we come into God's presence, let us certainly be mistrustful of ourselves, but still more let us arouse our faith in the power that Christ, our Head and Elder Brother, has to bring us near to His Father, Who is our Father likewise: *Ascendo ad Patrem meum et patrem vestrum.*[74] For if this faith is lively, we cleave closely to

[67] Hebr. v, 7. [68] *Exposit. Evangel. in Luc.* lib. v, c. 6.
[69] Joan. xvii, 5. [70] Ibid. 9. [71] Ibid. 20.
[72] *Verba quae Dominus noster Jesus Christus in oratione docuit, forma est desideriorum: non tibi licet petere aliud quod ibi scriptum est* (St. Aug., *Sermo* lvi, c. 3). *Nam quaelibet alia verba dicamus luae affectus orantis vel praecedendo format ut clareat, vel consequendo attendit ut crescat, nihil aliud dicimus quam quod in ista dominica oratione positum est, si recte et congruenter oramus. Liberum est aliis atque aliis verbis, eadem tamen, in orando dicere, sed non debet esse liberum alia dicere* (*Epist.* cxxx, c. 12).
[73] Hebr. v, 7. [74] Joan. xx, 17.

Christ, and Christ, Who dwells in us by this faith, *Christum inhabitare per fidem in cordibus vestris,*[75] takes us with Him where He is. "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me": *Volo, Pater, ut ubi sum ego, et illi sint mecum.*[76] And where is He? *In sinu Patris.* We are by faith there where He is in reality: in the Bosom of the Father. "In Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "we have boldness and access (to God) with confidence by faith in Him," *In Christo habemus fiduciam et accessum in confidentia per fidem ejus.*[77] Christ, by His Spirit, prays with us, in us, *Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis.*[78] What a motive we have for immense confidence when we come before God! Presented by Christ Who has merited for us our Divine filiation, we "are no more strangers and foreigners",[79] but children; we can open our hearts in tender love, perfectly allied to a deep reverence. The Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Jesus, harmonizes in us, by His gifts of fear and piety, that profound adoration and that boundless confidence, seemingly at first sight so contrary to one another, and He thereby gives the keynote proper to such an intercourse.

Let us then lean upon Christ. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name," Jesus says, "that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."[80] "Hitherto," He says again to His disciples, "you have not asked anything in My name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."[81] To ask in the name of Jesus is to ask what is conformable to our salvation, while remaining united to Him by faith and love, as living members of His Mystical Body. "Christ prays for us as our High Priest. He prays in us as our Head," says St. Augustine:[82] *Orat pro nobis ut sacerdos noster: orat in nobis ut caput nostrum.* That is why, he adds, the Eternal Father cannot separate us from Christ, any more than the head is separated from the body. In seeing us, He sees His Son, for we make only one with Him.

And that is why, too, in granting us what His Son asks of Him in us, He "is glorified in His Son," for the Father finds his glory in loving His Son, and being well pleased with Him. St. Teresa says "God is extremely pleased to see a soul humbly place His Divine Son as the intermediary between it and Him."[83] Is not that what the Church herself, Christ's Bride, does when she ends her prayers in the name of her Divine Bridegroom "Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest, world without end?"

At the same time, joy is born to the soul from this life of prayer.

[75] Ephes. iii, 17.
[76] Joan. xvii, 24.
[77] Ephes. iii, 12.
[78] Hebr. xii, 25.
[79] Ephes. ii, 19.
[80] Joan. xiv, 13.
[81] Ibid. xvi, 24.
[82] *Enarr. in Ps.* xlxxv, c. 1.
[83] *Works.* vol. i, p. 281.

Of course, while here below, it has not its full perfection; we have still to struggle and cannot always obtain at once what we desire, for, according to St. Augustine, " the man who sows to-day cannot hope to reap to-morrow ";[84] but that inward joy of being a child of God is made perfect little by little, and we have confidence it will reach its fulness one day in heavenly beatitude. For the soul that gives itself faithfully to prayer is detached more and more from created things, and so enters more fully into the life of God.

Let us, then, seek to be of those who keep united to God by a life of prayer and let us ask Our Lord to grant us this infinitely precious gift, itself the source of exceeding great graces, in the measure that is good for each one of us according to the Divine Plan. If we are faithful to ask, and, on the other hand, to respond, in the measure of our weakness, to the graces God gives us in Christ, we may be assured we shall live more and more according to the spirit of our adoption, and as children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, for the glory of our heavenly Father and the fulness of our joy: *Ut glorificetur Pater in Filio . . . ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum.*

[84] Cf. *Tract. in Joan.* lxxiii. n. 4.

XI. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

SUMMARY. I. Fraternal Charity, the *new commandment* and the *distinctive sign* of souls that belong to Christ: why love towards our neighbour is the *manifestation of love towards God.* II. *Principle of this dispensation;* the extension of the Incarnation; *Christ is one:* we cannot separate ourselves from the mystical body without being separated from Christ Himself. III. *The exercise and different forms of* charity; it must be modelled on that of Jesus Christ; how St Paul exhorts us to this. *Ut sint consummati in unum.*

IN all the preceding pages, we have seen how faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God—a living practical faith which shows itself, under the influence of love, by works of life, and is nourished by the Eucharist and by prayer—leads us by degrees to intimate union with Christ to the point of transforming us into Himself.

But if we wish this transformation of our life into that of Jesus Christ to be complete and true, and to meet with no obstacle to its perfection, the love we have towards our Saviour must radiate around us and shine forth upon all mankind. This is what St. John points out to us when he sums up all Christian life in these words: "And this is (God's) commandment, that we should believe in the Name of His Son Jesus Christ—and that we love one another."[1]

I have shown thus far how faith in Our Lord is exercised: it remains to me now to tell you how we are to fulfil His precept of mutual love. Let us see then why Jesus Christ has made this precept of charity towards His members the completion, as it were, of the love we ought to have for His Divine Person, and what characters this charity bears.

I

When did St. John hear this commandment which he makes known to us? At the Last Supper. The day so ardently desired by Our Lord has come: *Desiderio desideravi;*[2] He has eaten the Jewish Pasch with His disciples; but He has replaced the figures and symbols by a Divine reality; He has just instituted the Sacrament of union, and given His

[1] Joan. iii, 23. [2] Luc. xxii, 15.

Apostles the power of perpetuating it. And now it is that before going to suffer death, He opens His Sacred Heart to reveal its secrets to His "friends"; it is like the last will and testament of Christ. "A new commandment I give unto you," He says, "that you love one another as I have loved you";[3] and at the end of His discourse, He renews His precept: "This is My commandment, that you love one another."[4]

Our Lord begins by saying that the love we must have for one another constitutes a new commandment. Why does He use this expression?

Our Lord calls this precept of *Christian charity* "new", because it had not been explicitly promulgated in the Old Testament, at least in its universal acceptation. The precept of the love of God had indeed been given explicitly in the Pentateuch, and the love of God contains *implicitly* the love of our neighbour: some of the great saints of the Old Testament had understood, by the light of grace, that the duty of fraternal affection extended to all the human race. But nowhere under the Old Law do we find an *explicit* precept to love *all men*. The Israelites understood the precept:

Thou shalt not hate thy *brother* in thy heart . . . thou shalt love thy *neighbour* as thyself,"[5] not indeed of all men but of the neighbour in a restricted sense (the Hebrew word indicates what is signfied by neighbour, i.e. those of the same race, compatriots, relatives). Moreover, God Himself having forbidden His people to have any relations with certain races, having even commanded them to exterminate them, for instance, the Canaanites,[6] the Jews added a false interpretation which did not come from God: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy." The *explicit* command to love all men, enemies included, had not been affirmed and promulgated before the time of Jesus Christ. That is why He calls this a "new precept" and "His" precept. And He holds so much to the observance of this commandment that He asks His Father to bring about this mutual love in His disciples: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name whom Thou hast given Me: that they may be one, as we also are . . . I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."[7]

Jesus did not make this prayer only for His disciples, but for us all: "And not for them only do I pray," He says, "but for them also who believe in Me: that they may be all one, as Thou Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us."[8]

So this commandment of the love of our brethren is the supreme wish

[3] Joan. xiii, 34. [4] Ibid. xv, 12. [5] Levit. xix, 17, 18.
[6] We can understand this severity of Jehovah with regard to the populations steeped in the worst idolatries and immoralities as contact with them would have inevitably been fatal to the Israelites. [7] Joan. xvii, 11 and 23. [8] Joan. xvii, 20-21.

of Christ: it is so much His desire that He makes of it, not a counsel, but a commandment, *His* commandment, and He makes the fulfilment of it the infallible sign by which His disciples shall be recognized: *In hoc cognoscent omnes qui discipuli mei estis si dilectionem habueritis ad invicem.*[9] It is a sign all can understand, none other is given: *Cognoscent* OMNES: no one can be mistaken as to it: the supernatural love you have for one another will be the unequivocal proof that you truly belong to Me. And, in fact, in the first centuries, the pagans recognized the Christian by this sign: "See," they would say, "how they love one another."[10]

For Our Lord Himself, it will be the sign He will use in the day of judgment to distinguish the elect from the reprobate: He Himself says so: let us listen to Him, for He is the infallible Truth.

After the resurrection of the dead, the Son of Man will be seated on the throne of His Majesty: the nations will be gathered together before Him: He will place the good on His right hand and the wicked on His left. And speaking to the good He will say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And what reason will He give for this?" I was hungry and you gave Me to eat: I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: I was naked and you covered Me: I was sick and you visited Me: I was in prison and you came to Me." And the just will wonder, for never have they seen Christ in these necessities. But He will answer them: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren you did it to Me": *Mihi fecistis.*[11] He will then speak after the same manner to the wicked. He will separate them for ever from Himself. He will curse them. Why? Because they have not loved Him in the person of His brethren.

Thus, from the mouth of Jesus Himself, we know that the sentence which will decide our eternal lot will be founded on the love we have had for Jesus Christ in the person of our brethren. When we appear before Christ on the last day, He will not ask us if we have fasted a great deal, if we have passed our life in penance, if we have given many hours to prayer: no, but if we have loved and helped our brethren. Are the other commandments, then, put aside? Certainly not, but our observance of them will have served for nothing if we have not kept this precept of loving one another—this precept which is so dear to Our Lord, since it is *His* commandment.

On the other hand, it is impossible for a soul to be perfect in the love

[9] Ibid. xiii, 35. [10] Tertullian. *Apolog.* c. 39. [11] Matth. xxv, 40.

of its neighbour without possessing in itself the love of God, which love at the same time embraces the Divine Will in all its extent. Why is this?

It is because charity— whether it has God for its object or is exercised towards our neighbour—is *one* in its supernatural *motive* which is God's infinite perfection.[12] Therefore, if you truly love God, you will necessarily love your neighbour. "Perfect charity towards the neighbour," said the Eternal Father to St. Catherine of Siena, "essentially depends on the perfect charity a soul has for Me. The soul has the same measure of perfection or imperfection in its love for the creature as is found in its love for Me."[13]

From another point of view, there are so many causes which separate us from our neighbour: selfishness, conflicting interests, differences of character, injuries received, that, if you really and supernaturally love your neighbour, the love of God necessarily reigns in your soul, and, with the love of God, the other virtues which He commands. If you do not love God, your love of your neighbour will not long resist the difficulties met with in its exercise.

We see then with how much reason Our Lord gives this charity as the distinctive sign by which His disciples will be infallibly recognized: *In hoc cognoscent omnes*. St. Paul, too, writes that all the precepts are summed up in these words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[14] And again, still more explicitly: "All the law is fulfilled in one word: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Omnis *lex in* uno *sermone impletur: diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum*.[15]

It is as St. John has so well said: "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us."[16] Like Christ, Whose last words he heard, St. John repeats that charity is the mark of the children of God. "We know,"—observe the sovereign certitude this term expresses—"we know that we have passed from death to life," (supernatural and divine) "because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death."[17] "Would you know," says St. Augustine, "if you are living the life of grace, if God is giving you His friendship, if you are numbered among Christ's disciples, if you are living by His Spirit? Question yourselves; see if you love men, your brethren, all men, if you love them for God, and you will have the answer. And this answer does not deceive."[18]

[12] Cf. St. Thom. II-II, q. xxv, a. 1. [13] *Dial.* [14] Rom. xiii, 9-10.
[15] Gal. v, 14. [16] I Joan. iv, 12. [17] I Joan. iii, 14.
[18] *Si vis nosse quia accepisti Spiritum* (*Sanctum*) *interroga cor tuum: si est ibi dilectio fratris, securus esto. Non potest esse dilectio sine Spiritu Dei. In Epistol. Joan. Tract.* vi, c. 3.

Hear what St. Teresa says likewise on this subject; the text is a little long but it is very explicit. "God asks of you only two things, the one is to love Him, and the other is to love our neighbour. That is, therefore, what we have to strive for; in accomplishing this perfectly, we shall be doing His Will and shall be united to Him. . . ." That is the aim, but are we sure of attaining it? "The most certain sign by which we may know if we are faithfully practising these two commandments," the Saint continues, "is, in my opinion, if we have a true and genuine love for our neighbour. For we cannot know for certain to what extent we love God, although there are many signs by which we may judge of this; but we see much more clearly where the love of our neighbour is concerned. It is then extremely important to consider carefully the disposition of our soul and our outward behaviour towards our neighbour. If, both interiorly and exteriorly, all is perfect, then we can be well assured, for, considering the depravation of our nature, we could never love our neighbour perfectly unless we had within us a great love for God."[19]

The great saint here only echoes the doctrine of St. John. This Apostle, who is the herald of love, treats as "a liar" one who says: "I love God," and hates his brother, for, says he, if you love not your brother whom you see, how can you love God Whom you see not?[20] What do these words signify?

We must love God *totaliter* and *totum*.

To love God *totaliter,* totally, is to love God with all our soul, all our mind, all our heart, and all our strength: it is to love God in accepting, in its full extent, all that His holy Will ordains.

To love God *totum* is to love God and all that God associates with Himself. Now what is it that God associates with Himself? First of all, the Humanity of Christ in the Person of the Word, and that is why we cannot love God without loving Jesus Christ at the same time. When we tell God that we wish to love Him, God first asks us to accept this Humanity personally united to His Word. *Hic est Filius meus . . . ipsum audite.* But the Word, in uniting Himself to human nature, has fundamentally united to Himself all humanity in a mystical manner. Christ is only the Eldest-born of a multitude of brethren whom God makes the participants of His nature. They are so united to Him that Our Lord Himself declares they are as gods, that is to say, like to God: *Ego dixi, dii estis.*[21] They are by grace what Jesus is by nature: the beloved sons of God. We here touch upon the intimate reason of the precept which Jesus calls "His commandment," the

[19] *The Interior Castle.* 5th Mansion c. 3.
[20] I Joan. iv, 20.
[21] Joan. x, 34; Cf. Ps. lxxxi, 6

profound reason which makes its importance so vital: since the Incarnation, and by the Incarnation, all men are by right, if not in fact, united to Christ as the members are united to the head in the same body: the damned, alone, are cut off for ever from this union.

There are souls that seek God in Jesus Christ, and accept the Humanity of Christ, but stop there. That is not sufficient: we must accept the Incarnation with all the consequences it involves: we must not let the gift of ourselves stop at Christ's own Humanity but extend it to His Mystical Body. That is why—never forget this, for it is one of the most important points of the supernatural life—to abandon the least of our brethren is to abandon Christ Himself; to succour one of them, is to succour Christ in person. If anyone strikes one of your members, your eye or your arm, it is yourself they strike; in the same way, to touch one of the members of the body of Christ is to touch Christ Himself. And that is why Our Lord has told us that any good or evil we do to the least of His brethren, it is to Himself we do it. Our Lord is the Very Truth; He cannot teach us anything which is not founded on a supernatural reality. Now, in this, the supernatural reality that faith discovers to us is that Christ, in becoming incarnate, has mystically united Himself to all humanity; not to accept and not to love all those who belong or who could belong to Christ by grace, is not to accept and not to love Christ Himself.

We find a remarkable confirmation of this truth in the account of the conversion of St. Paul. Filled with hatred against the Christians, he goes towards the city of Damascus to imprison Christ's disciples. While on the road thither, he is overthrown by the Lord and he hears a voice crying to him: "Why persecutest thou Me?" *Quid me persequeris?* "Who art Thou, Lord?" Paul asks. And it is told him: "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." Christ does not say: "Why persecutest thou My disciples?" No, He identifies Himself with them, and the blows which the persecutor deals to the Christians strike Christ Himself: "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest."

The lives of the saints abound in traits of this kind. Look at St. Martin; he is a soldier, not yet baptized; and lo! he meets a poor man on his road, and being touched with compassion, he divides his mantle with him. The following night Our Lord appears to him clad in that part of the mantle given to the poor man and Martin, enraptured, hears Jesus Christ say to the angels who accompany Him, "Martin, while yet only a catechumen, gave Me this mantle."

Again, there is St. Elizabeth of Hungary. One day, in the absence of the Duke, her husband, she meets a little leper abandoned by all. She takes him and lays him upon her own bed. The Duke, on his return,

learns the news and, in a rage, wants to drive away the poor leper. But on approaching the bed, he sees the form of Christ Crucified.[22]

We read likewise in the life of St. Catherine of Siena how one day she was in the Church of the Friars Preachers; a poor man came to her and asked alms for the love of God. She had nothing to give him for she never carried with her either gold or silver. She asked the begger to wait till she returned home, promising him that she would then willingly give him the alms of all she could find in her house. But the poor man insisted: "If you have anything to give, I beg you to give it me here, for I cannot wait so long." Catherine anxiously sought for something she could give him to relieve his necessity; she ended by finding upon her a small silver cross, and at once gave it with joy to the poor man, who went away content. The following night, Our Lord appeared to the saint. He had in His Hand the little cross set with precious stones. "Dost thou recognize this cross, My daughter?" "Certainly I recognize it," replied the Saint, "but it was not so beautiful when it was mine." Our Lord continued: "Thou gavest it to Me yesterday, for love of the virtue of charity; the precious stones signify this love. I promise thee that at the day of judgment, before the whole assembly of angels and men, I will give thee this cross such as thou seest it, so that thy joy may be full. On that day, when I shall solemnly manifest the justice and mercy of My Father, I shall not forget the work of mercy thou hast done unto Me."[23]

Christ has become our neighbour, or rather our neighbour is Christ, presenting Himself to us under such or such a form. He presents Himself to us suffering in the sick, in the needy, in those who are in want, a prisoner in those in captivity, sad in those who mourn. But it is faith that shows Him thus in His members, and if we do not see Him in them, it is because our faith is weak, our love imperfect. That is what St. John says: "If we love not our neighbour whom we see, how can we love God Whom we see not?" If we do not love God under the visible form under which He presents Himself to us, that is to say, in our neighbour, how can we say that we love Him in His Divinity?[24]

II

I have already said, in speaking of the Church, that there is something remarkable in the Divine economy such as it has been manifested

[22] *Montalembert, St. Elizabeth of Hungary.*
[23] *Life of St. Catherine of Siena,* by Blessed Raymund of Capua.
[24] Cf. St. Thom. II-II, q. xxiv, a. 2, ad. 1.

to us since the Incarnation, and this is the large place held by men, like to ourselves, as instruments in the distribution of grace.

If we would know the authentic doctrine of Christ, we have not to ask it directly of God, nor seek it ourselves in the inspired Books, in interpreting them by our own judgment, but we have to ask it of the pastors constituted to govern the Church. "But these are men," you will say: "men like ourselves." That does not matter, it is to them we must go: they represent Christ, it is Christ we must see in them. "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me."[25]

In the same way, in order to receive the Sacraments, we must receive them by the hand of men appointed by Christ: in Baptism, Penance, etc., it is Christ Who confers the Sacraments on us, but by the intermediary of man.

It is the same with charity. Do you wish to love God? Do you wish to love Jesus Christ? And we ought to do so because it is "the greatest and first commandment.[26] Love your neighbour, love those with whom you live; love them because God destines all, as He destines you, to the same eternal beatitude[27] merited by Christ, our one and only Head, because it is under the form of our neighbour that God presents Himself to us here below.

So true is this that God's conduct towards us is regulated on our conduct towards our neighbour. Here are Our Lord's own words:

"With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again."[28] And see how He takes the trouble to enter into details: Your Father will only forgive your offences if you forgive those which are committed against you. Unless you show mercy there shall be reserved for you judgment without mercy. Would you be neither judged nor condemned? Do not yourselves judge or condemn. And if you wish God to show kindness towards you, show it yourselves towards men, your brethren. "Give", He says again, "give, and it shall be given to you; good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over."[29] Why so much insistence? . . . Once more, because, since the Incarnation, Christ is so united to humanity that all the love we show supernaturally to men falls back upon Him.

I am sure that many souls will here find the reason of the difficulties, the sadness, the want of expansion in their inner life; they do not give themselves enough to Christ in the person of His members; they hold themselves back too much. If they would but give, it would be given

[25] Luc. x, 10. [26] Matth. xxii, 38.

[27] *Deus diligitur sicut beatitudinis causa: proximus autem sicut beatitudinem ab eo simul nobiscum participans.* St. Thom. II-II q. xxvi, a. 2.

[28] Matth. vii, 2. [29] Luc. vi, 38.

to them and given abundantly; for Jesus Christ will not let Himself be outdone in love; if they would overcome their selfishness and give themselves generously to their neighbour for God's sake, Christ would give Himself to them in His fulness; if they would forget themselves, Christ would take the care of them upon Himself, and Who better than He can lead us to beatitude?

It is not a small thing to love our neighbour always and unfailingly; it needs a strong and generous love. Although the love of God is in itself, on account of the transcendance of its object, more perfect than the love of our neighbour, yet, as the motive ought to be the same in the love we bear to God and that we bear to our neighbour,[30] often the act of love towards our neighbour requires more intensity and gains more merit. Why is this? Because God, being Himself Goodness and Beauty, and having shown infinite love towards us, grace urges us to love Him; while, as for our neighbour, there is always the probability of meeting in him—or in ourselves—with obstacles resulting from the differences of interest that arise between us. These difficulties require from the soul more fervour, more generosity, more forgetfulness of self and one's own feelings and personal desires: that is why, if love towards our neighbour is to be maintained, there is more need of effort.

In this it is much the same as when a soul is in interior aridity; it needs more generosity to remain faithful than when it abounds in consolation. So it is with suffering; God often makes use of it in the spiritual life to develop our love, because, in such moments, the soul has to overcome itself, and that is a mark of the strength of its charity. Look at Our Lord; He made no act of love more intense than when in His Agony He accepted the bitter chalice offered to Him, and when, abandoned by His Father, He achieved His sacrifice upon the Cross.

In a like manner, the supernatural love that is exercised toward our neighbour, despite repugnances, antipathies, or natural dissimilarity, manifests, in the soul possessing this love, a greater intensity of Divine life. I do not fear to say that one who yields himself supernaturally and unreservedly to Christ in the person of his neighbour, loves Christ greatly and is infinitely loved by Him; he will make great progress in union with Our Lord. While if you meet with one who devotes much time to prayer and, in spite of that, voluntarily shuts up his compassion against the necessities of his neighbour, you may hold it for certain that there is much illusion in his life of prayer. For the

[30] "God being the formal reason of the love we should have for our neighbour, for we only ought to love our neighbour for God, it is manifest that the act by which we love God is specifically the same as that by which we love our neighbour." St. Thom. II-II, q. xxv, a. 1.

object of prayer is to yield the soul to the Divine Will; and if the soul shuts out the neighbour, it also shuts out Christ and fails to comply with Christ's most sacred desire: *Ut unum sint, ut sint consummati in unum.* True sanctity manifests itself by charity and the entire gift of self.

If, then, we wish to remain united to Our Lord, it is of extreme importance to see if we are united to the members of His Mystical Body. Let us take care. The least voluntary coldness, deliberately cherished against one of our brethren, could form an obstacle, more or less grave according to its degree, to our union with Christ. That is why Christ tells us that, if at the moment of making our offering at the altar, we remember our brother has anything against us, we must "leave there our offering, and go first to be reconciled to our brother, and then coming we shall offer our gift".[31] When we communicate, we receive the substance of Christ's physical Body; we must also receive and accept His Mystical Body; it is impossible for Christ to descend into our souls and there be the principle of union, if we retain resentment against one of His members. St. Thomas calls sacrilegious Communion a lie. Why so? Because to receive Christ in Communion is to declare by the very fact that we are united to Him; if one is in a state of grievous sin, and therefore turned away from Christ, to approach Him in Communion is a lie.[32] In the same way, all proportion guarded, to draw near to Christ, wishing to be united to Him, while we exclude from our love a single member of His, is to lie in act; it is wishing to divide Christ; we must communicate with what St. Augustine calls the "whole Christ".[33] Hear what St. Paul says on this subject: "The chalice of benediction (that is to say, the Eucharistic cup), is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord? For," he adds, "we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread."[34]

Thus the great Apostle, who understood so well and exposed so vividly the doctrine of the Mystical Body, had in horror the discords and dissensions which might arise between Christians. "I beseech you, brethren," he says, "by the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no schisms among you; but that you be perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment."[35] And what reason does he give for this? "As the body is one and has

[31] Matth. v, 23-24.

[32] *Cum peccatores sumentes hoc sacramentum cum peccato mortali, significent se Christo per fidem formatam unitos esse, talsitatem in sacramento committunt.* . . . St. Thom. III, q. lxxx, a. 4. Conclusio.

[33] St. Aug. *De unitate Eccles.* 4. See texts from the same quoted previously, p. 102.

[34] I Cor. x, 16, 17. [35] Ibid. i, 10.

many members, and all the members of the body whereas they are many yet are one body, so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free . . . you are the body of Christ, and members of member."[36]

III

It is from this high principle that charity derives its most intimate reason; from this principle also we may lay down what qualities this charity should have in practice.

As we all form one single body, our charity ought to be universal. In principle, charity excludes no one, for Christ died for all, and all are called to belong to His Kingdom. Charity embraces even sinners, because the possibility remains of their again becoming living members of Christ's body; only those souls that the sentence of damnation has for ever separated from the mystical body are excluded from charity.

But this love has to take different forms according to our neighbour's state; our love, in fact, ought not to be a platonic love, of theory alone, which occupies itself with abstractions, but a love that translates itself into appropriate acts.

The blessed in heaven are the glorious members of Christ's body, they have reached the term of their union with God; our love towards them will take one of its most perfect forms, that of complacency and thanksgiving; it will consist in congratulating them on their glory, in rejoicing with them, in praising God with them for the place He has granted them in the Kingdom of His Son. Towards the souls that are finishing their purification in Purgatory, our love becomes one of pity; our compassion should urge us to assist them by our suffrages, and especially by means of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Here on earth, Christ presents Himself to us in the person of our neighbour under many different forms which furnish us with various ways of exercising our charity. Undoubtedly, there must be degrees and a certain order to follow. Our neighbour is, first of all, anyone who is closely united to us by ties of blood, for neither in this case does grace overthrow the order established by nature. Charity in a superior will not have the same "tonality" as in an inferior. Moreover, the exercise of material charity must be compatible with the supernatural virtue of prudence: a father of a family cannot despoil himself of all his fortune, in favour of the poor, but to the detriment of his children.

[36] Ibid. xii, 12-14 and 27.

While the supernatural virtue of justice can and ought to require repentance and expiation from the culprit before he is forgiven, hatred, that is to say, to will or wish evil for evil, is not permitted; it is not permitted to exclude anyone from our prayers: such an exclusion would be directly opposed to charity.

There is often no better proof of forgiveness than to pray for those who have offended us. To love our neighbour supernaturally is, indeed, to love him in view of God, to the end that he may gain or preserve God's grace which will bring him to eternal beatitude.[37] To love is to "wish good to another, says St. Thomas,[38] but all individual good is subordinate to the supreme good. That is why to give God, the Infinite Good, to the ignorant by instructing them, is so pleasing to God; and so it is to pray for the conversion of infidels and sinners that they may receive the faith or recover Divine grace. When, during prayer, we recommend to God the needs of souls, or when at Mass, we sing the *Kyrie eleison* for all those who are awaiting the light of the Gospel or the strength of grace in temptation, when we pray on behalf of the labour of missionaries, we perform acts of true charity extremely acceptable to Our Lord. If Christ has promised to give a reward for a cup of cold water given in His Name, what will He not give for a life of prayer or of expiation consecrated to the advancement of His Reign? There are yet other necessities. It may be a poor man who needs help; a sick person to be relieved, nursed, or visited; one who is in sorrow to be comforted by kind words; another overflowing with joy, who wants to share it with someone: *Gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus*;[39] Charity, says St. Paul, makes itself "all things to all men".[40]

See how Jesus Christ fulfilled this precept of charity, in order to be our Model.

Christ loved to give pleasure. The first miracle of His public life was to change water into wine at the marriage-feast of Cana, so as to spare His hosts any confusion when the wine failed.[41] We hear Him promise to refresh all who labour and are burdened and come to Him.[42] And how well He has kept His promise! The Evangelists often repeat that it is because He is "moved with compassion", *Misericordia motus*,[43] that He works His miracles; it is from this motive He cures the lepers and raises the son of the widow of Naim. It is because He has compassion on the multitude who, having unweariedly followed

[37] *Ratio diligendi proximum Deus est: hoc enim in proximo debemus diligere ut in Deo sit.* St. Thom. II-II, q. xxv, a. i, and q. xxvi.

[38] *Amare nihil aliud est quam velle bonum alicui.* St. Thom. I, q. xx, a. 2; cf. also I-II, q. 28, a. 1.

[39] Rom. xii, 15. [40] I Cor. ix, 22. [41] Joan. ii, 1-11. [42] Matth. xi, 28.

[43] Luc. vii, 23.

Him during three days, now suffer hunger, that He multiplies the loaves: *Misereor super turbam.*[44] Zacheus, a chief of the publicans, one of that class of Jews looked upon as sinners by the Pharisees, ardently wishes to see Christ. But on account of his short stature he cannot succeed in doing so, for the multitude surrounds Jesus on every side. Therefore Zacheus climbs up into a tree along the road where Jesus is about to pass, and Our Lord anticipates this publican's desire. Having come close up to him, He tells him to come down for He wills to be His guest that very hour, and Zacheus, full of joy, and at the height of his wishes, receives Him into his house.[45] See again how, for His friends, He puts His power at the service of His love. Martha and Magdalen lament in His presence for their brother Lazarus who is already buried; Jesus is moved: tears, true, human tears, but the tears of a God, fall from His eyes; *Jesus . . . lacrymatus est.* "Where have you laid him?" He at once asks, for His love cannot remain inactive, and He goes to raise up His friend. And the Jews who were witnesses of this scene said: "Behold how He loved him!" *Ecce quomodo amabat eum!*[46]

Christ, says St. Paul, who loves to employ this term, is the very kindness of God appearing upon earth;[47] He is a King, but a King full of *meekness*,[48] Who bids us forgive and proclaims those blessed who, following His example, are merciful.[49] St. Peter, who lived with Him three years, says that everywhere He went about doing good, *Pertransiit benefaciendo.*[50] Like the Good Samaritan, whose charitable action He so wonderfully describes, Christ has taken humanity into His arms, He has taken its sorrows into His soul: *Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit.*[51] He comes "for the destruction of sin",[52] which is the supreme evil, the only true evil; He drives out the devil from the bodies of the possessed; but, above all, He drives him out from souls, in giving His own life for each one of us: *Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me.*[53] What greater mark of love is there than this? There is none. *Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis.*[54]

Now, the love of Jesus for men is the model of what our love should be: "Love one another as I have loved you"; *Sicut dilexi vos.*[55] What is the deep reason of Our Lord's love for His disciples, and for us in them?

Because they belonged to His Father: *Rogo . . . pro his quos dedisti mihi, quia tui sunt.*[56] It is because souls belong to God and to Christ

[44] Marc. viii, 2. [45] Luc. xix, 5-6. [46] Joan. xi, 36. [47] Tit. iii, 4.
[48] Matth. xxi, 5. [49] Ibid. v, 7. [50] Act. x, 36. [51] Isa. liii, 4.
[52] Hebr. ix. [53] Gal. ii, 20. [54] Joan. xv. 13. [55] Ibid. xiii, 34.
[56] Joan. xvii, 9.

that we must love them. Our love must be supernatural; true charity is the love of God, enfolding, in the same embrace, God and all that is united to Him. We must love all souls as Christ loves them, even to the supreme degree of giving ourselves: *in finem*.

See how full of charity St. Paul was towards the Christians, animated as he was with the spirit of Christ: "Who is weak and I am not weak? . . . Who is scandalized and I am not on fire?"[57] How charitable was he who could say: "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls." LIBENTISSIME *impendam et superimpendar!*[58] The Apostle goes even so far as to wish himself to be anathema for the sake of his brethren;[59] in the midst of his continual journeys, he labours with his own hands so as not to be burdensome to the Christian communities who receive him.[60] And you know his touching letter to his friend Philemon asking mercy for the slave, Onesimus. This slave has run away from his master's house so as to escape punishment; he has taken refuge with St. Paul, who converts him and to whom he ministers. But the great Apostle, who would not injure the rights of Philemon according to the laws then in force, sends back the slave to his friend; he writes to Philemon, who had the power of life and death over the fugitive, a few lines to prepare a favourable reception for him. This note, St. Paul writes—as he himself says—with his own hand, in the Roman prison; it expresses all that charity can find to say that is most urgent and delicate. "I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bonds . . . whom I have sent back to thee, and do thou . . . receive him as myself. And if he hath wronged thee in anything, or is in thy debt, put that to my account. . . . Refresh my heart in the Lord. . . ."[61]

We understand after this how the Apostle could write such a magnificent hymn to exalt the excellence of charity: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."[62]

But all these diverse acts spring from the same source: namely, Christ seen through faith, in our neighbour.

Let us then endeavour first of all to love God by keeping united to Our Lord: from this Divine love, as from a glowing furnace whence

[57] II Cor. xi, 29. [58] Ibid. xii, 15. [59] Rom. ix, 3.
[60] II Thess. iii, n.; cf. II Cor. xii, 16.
[61] Philem. 9 sq. [62] I Cor. xiii, 4-7.

a thousand rays shine forth to give light and warmth, our charity will be extended to all around us, and so much the further according as the furnace is the more ardent. Our charity towards our neighbour ought to radiate from our love for God. So then, I will say to you with St. Paul: "Love one another with the charity of brotherhood with honour preventing one another. . . . Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep, being of one mind one towards another. . . . If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men."[63] And to sum up his doctrine: "I beseech you to support one another with charity . . . careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; one body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling."[64]

Let us never forget the principle that should guide us in this path: we are *all one in Christ*; and it is charity that preserves this unity. We only go to the Father by Christ; but we must accept Christ entirely, in Himself and in His members; there lies the secret of the true Divine life within us.

That is why Our Lord has made mutual charity *His* commandment and the object of His last prayer: *Ut sint* CONSUMMATI *in unum*. Let us strive to fulfil, as far as possible, this supreme wish of Christ's Heart. Love is a source of life, and if we draw forth this love from God so that it may be shed unfailingly upon all the members of the body of Christ, life will superabound within our souls, for Christ, according to His own promise, will pour upon us, in return for our self-forgetfulness, a measure of grace "good and pressed down, and shaken together and running over".

[63] Rom. xii, 10 et sq. [64] Ephes. iv, 1-4.

XII. THE MOTHER OF THE INCARNATE WORD

SUMMARY. The place that devotion to the Virgin Mary holds in our spiritual life: the disciple of Christ must, like Jesus, be the *Son of Mary*. I. What Mary has given to Jesus. By her "Fiat", the Virgin consented to *give a human nature to the Word;* she is the *Mother of Christ;* as such, she enters essentially into the vital mystery of Christianity. II. What Jesus has given to His Mother. He *chose* her from among all women; He *loved* and *obeyed* her. He has *associated* her, in the closest manner, in *His mysteries,* especially in that of the Redemption. III. The *homage* we owe to Mary: *to exalt her privileges,* following the example of the Church in her liturgy. IV. The profit that devotion to the Blessed Virgin brings to the soul: Mary *inseparable from Jesus* in the Divine Plan; her all powerful *influence* with God; her grace of *spiritual maternity*. To ask Mary to "form Jesus" within us.

IN the course of these conferences, I have often said that all holiness for us consists in the imitation of Jesus Christ, in the conformity of our whole being to the Son of God, and in our participation in His Divine Sonship. To be by grace what Jesus is by nature is the end of our predestination and the norm of our sanctity: *Quos praescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.*[1]

Now, in Our Lord some things are essential to Him and some accidental. Christ was born at Bethlehem, He fled into Egypt, He passed His childhood and youth at Nazareth, He died under Pontius Pilate; these diverse circumstances of place and time are only accidental to Christ's existence. There are other things so far essential to Him that without them Christ would no longer be Christ. He is God and Man, Son of God and Son of man, true God and true Man: these are constitutive, intangible qualities.

In the Scriptures, some astonishing words are applied to Eternal Wisdom, the Word of God. "My delights are to be with the children of men": *Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum.*[2] Who could have believed that? The Word is God: *Deus erat Verbum;* in the Bosom of His Father, He lives in infinite light; He possesses all the riches of the Divine perfections; He enjoys the fulness of all life and all beatitude.

[1] Rom. viii, 29. [2] Prov. viii, 31.

And yet He declares by the sacred writer that He finds His joy in living among men.

This marvel has come to pass; for "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", *Et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.* The Word desired to become one of us; He has realized His Divine desire in an ineffable manner; and this realization seems, so to speak, to have fulfilled His desires. When we read the Gospel, we see indeed that Christ often affirms His Divinity, as when He speaks of His eternal relations with His Father: "I and My Father are One",[3] or when He confirms the profession of faith of His hearers: "Blessed art thou", He says when Peter proclaims the Divinity of his Master, "blessed art thou, for it is My Father that revealed it to thee";[4] however, we do not hear Him in express words give Himself the title of "Son of God".

How many times, on the contrary, do we not hear Him call Himself the "Son of Man". One would say that Christ is proud of this title which He loves to give Himself. But He never separates it from His Divine Sonship or the privileges of His Divinity. He tells us that "the Son of man has the power (which alone belongs to God), to forgive sins";[5] we see that, immediately after His disciples have proclaimed Him "Christ, the Son of God", He announces to them that this Christ, "the Son of man", must suffer, that He will "be put to death, and after three days rise again".[6]

Nowhere, perhaps, has our Divine Saviour more clearly and forcibly spoken of Himself as both God and Man as in the days of His Passion. See Him before the tribunal of the Jewish high priest Caiphas. Caiphas, in the midst of the assembly, conjures Jesus to declare if He is the Son of God. "Thou hast said it," Jesus answers: "nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven."[7] Notice that Jesus does not say as we might have expected—since here, there is only question of His Divinity—"You shall see the Son of God coming in the clouds of heaven as eternal and sovereign Judge"; but: "You shall see the Son of man". In presence of the supreme tribunal, He joins this last title to that of His Divinity: for Him, these two titles are inseparable, in the same manner as the two natures upon which they are founded are indissolubly united and inseparable. There is not less sin in rejecting the Humanity of Christ than there is in denying His Divinity.

Now, if Jesus Christ is the Son of God by His ineffable and eternal

[3] Joan. x, 30. [4] Matth. xvi, 17. [5] Marc. ii, 10. [6] Ibid. viii, 31.
[7] Matth. xxvi, 64; cf. Joan. i, 51; iii, 13.

birth "in the Bosom of the Father", *Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te*,[8] He is Son of man by His temporal birth in the bosom of a woman: *Misit Deus Filium suum, factum ex muliere*.[9]

This woman is Mary, and she is a Virgin. It is from her, and from her alone, that Christ takes His human nature; it is to her He owes it that He is Son of man; she is truly Mother of God. Mary, therefore, occupies a transcendent, essential and unique place in Christianity. In the same way as the quality of "Son of man" cannot be separated in Christ from that of "Son of God", so is Mary united to Jesus: indeed, the Virgin Mary enters into the mystery of the Incarnation by a title belonging to the very nature of the mystery.

That is why we must stay a few moments to contemplate this marvel of a simple creature being associated, by such close bonds, in the economy of the fundamental mystery of Christianity and, consequently, with our supernatural life, that Divine life which comes to us from Christ, the God-Man, and that Christ gives to us, inasmuch as He is God, but by means of His Humanity.[10] We must be, like Jesus, *Filius Dei and Filius Mariae*; He is both of these perfectly; if then we wish to reproduce His likeness within us, we must bear this two-fold quality.

No piety would be truly Christian if it did not include in its object the Mother of the Incarnate Word. Devotion towards the Virgin Mary is not only important, but necessary, if we wish to draw abundantly at the source of life. To separate Christ from His Mother in our piety, is to divide Christ; it is to lose sight of the essential mission of His Sacred Humanity in the distribution of Divine grace. Where the Mother is left out, the Son is no longer understood. Has not this befallen Protestant nations? In rejecting devotion to Mary under pretext of not derogating from the dignity of a single Mediator, have they not ended in even losing faith in the Divinity of Christ Himself? If Jesus Christ is our Saviour, our Mediator, our Elder Brother, because He has taken upon Himself our human nature, how can we love Him truly, how can we resemble Him perfectly, without having a special devotion to her from whom He took this human nature?

But this must be an enlightened devotion. Let us say, then, in a few words what Mary has given to Jesus; secondly, what Jesus has done for His Mother; from this we shall see what the Blessed Virgin must be for us; and finally what is the supernatural fruitfulness of our devotion to the Mother of Christ.

[8] Act. xiii, 33; cf. Ps. ii, 7. [9] Gal. iv, 4.
[10] See fourth Conference: *Christ, the Efficient Cause of all Grace*.

I

What has Mary given to Jesus?

While remaining a virgin, she has given Him a human nature. That is a unique privilege that Mary shares with none: *Nec primam similem visa est, nec habere sequentem.*[11] The Word might have appeared here below by taking a human nature created *ex nihilo*, drawn out of nothing, and already formed in the perfection of its organism, as Adam was formed in the earthly paradise. For reasons of infinite wisdom, this was not done. In uniting Himself to humanity, the Word willed to pass through all the stages of human growth in order to sanctify them; He willed to be born of a woman.

But what is so wonderful in this birth is that the Word made it subject, so to speak, to the consent of this woman.

Let us transport ourselves in spirit to Nazareth and contemplate this ineffable scene. The Angel appears to the young Virgin. After having saluted her, he delivers his message: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High . . . and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Mary asks the angel how this shall be done, since she is a virgin: *Quomodo fiet istud quoniam virum non cognosco?*[12] Gabriel answers: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Then, instancing the example of Elizabeth, who has conceived in spite of her former barrenness, because it hath thus pleased the Lord, the Angel adds: "No word shall be impossible with God"; He can, when He so wills, suspend the laws of nature.

God proposes the mystery of the Incarnation which will only be fulfilled in the Virgin when she shall have given her free consent. The accomplishment of the mystery hangs in suspense until then. At this moment, according to the saying of St. Thomas, Mary represents us all in her person. It is as if God awaited the response of the humanity to which He wills to unite Himself: *Per annuntiationem exspectabatur consensus virginis loco totius humanae naturae.*[13] What a solemn moment it is! For now the vital mystery of Christianity is about to be decided. St. Bernard, in one of his most beautiful homilies on the Annunciation,[14] shows us the whole human race, who for thousands of

[11] Antiphon for the office of Lauds at Christmas.
[12] Luc. i, 34. [13] St. Thom. III, q. xxx, a. 1.
[14] *Homil.* iv. *super Missus est*, c. 8.

years have hoped for salvation, the Angelic choirs, and even God Himself, as if in suspense, awaiting the acceptation of the young Virgin.

And Mary gives her reply: full of faith in the heavenly word, and entirely submissive to the Divine Will that has just been manifested to her, she says: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word", *Ecce ancilla Domini; fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*[15] This *Fiat* is Mary's consent to the Divine plan of Redemption; this *Fiat* is like the echo of the *Fiat* of the creation; but it is a new world, an infinitely higher world, a world of grace that God Himself creates after this consent: for at this moment the Divine Word, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, becomes incarnate in Mary: *Et Verbum caro factum est.*[16]

It is certain, as we have just heard by the voice of the angel, that no human concourse is to intervene, for all must be holy in Christ's conception and birth; but it is from her most pure blood that Mary conceives by the operation of the Holy Ghost, it is from her that the Man-God is to come forth. When Jesus is born at Bethlehem, who is it that lies there upon the straw? It is the Child-God, it is the Word, Who, while remaining a Divine Person, *Quod erat permansit*,[17] has united to Himself a human nature in the bosom of the Virgin. In this Child there are two quite distinct natures, but only one Person, the Divine Person: the term of this virginal birth is the Man-God: "The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;[18] this Man-God, this God-made-Man, is Mary's Son. This is what Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to her: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"[19] Mary is the Mother of Christ, for, as all other mothers do for their children, she formed and nourished with her most pure substance the body of Jesus. This is a dogma of faith. If by His eternal birth *In splendoribus sanctorum*,[20] Christ is truly the Son of God, *Deum verum de Deo vero*, by His temporal birth, He is truly the Son of Mary; the only Son of God is also the only Son of the Virgin.

Such is the ineffable union existing between Jesus and Mary: she is His Mother, He is her Son. This union is indissoluble; and as Jesus is at the same time the Son of God, come to save the world, Mary is indeed intimately associated in the vital mystery of all Christianity. All her greatness is founded on this special privilege of her Divine Motherhood.

[15] Luc. i, 38. [16] Joan. i, 14.
[17] Antiphon for the Office of the Circumcision.
[18] Luc. i, 35. [19] Luc. i, 43. [20] Ps. cix, 3.

II

This privilege is not the only one. A whole crown of graces adorns Christ's Virgin Mother, all due to her Divine maternity. Jesus, as man, depends on Mary; but, as the Eternal Word, He is anterior to her. Consider what He has done for her from whom He was to take a human nature. Being God, that is to say the Almighty and Infinite Wisdom, He will adorn this His creature with priceless jewels.

First He has, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, *chosen* her in preference to all others. To show the eminence of this choice, the Church, on the feast of Our Lady, applies to her a passage of Scripture which can only relate in certain points to Eternal Wisdom: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived . . . the mountains had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth": *Ante colles ego parturiebar. . . .*[21] What do these words show? The special predestination of Mary in the Divine plan. The Eternal Father, in His Divine thoughts, does not separate her from Christ: He comprehends in the same act of love, the Virgin, who is to be the Mother of Christ, and the Humanity of His Son in Whom He is well pleased.[22] This singular predestination is the fountainhead of unique graces for Mary.

The Blessed Virgin is *immaculate*. All the children of Adam are born with the stain of original sin, slaves of the devil, enemies to God. This is the law passed by God for all Adam's race. Alone out of all creatures, Mary is to escape this universal law. The Eternal Word will make this one exception—one only—for her in whom He is to be incarnate. Not for a single moment is the soul of Mary to belong to the devil; it will be radiant with purity; and that is why, from the morrow of the Fall of our first parents, God put absolute enemity between the devil and the chosen Virgin; it is she whose heel is to crush the infernal serpent.[23] With the Church, let us often remind Mary of this privilege which she alone possesses, of being without stain; let us love to repeat to her: *Tota pulchra es Maria, et macula originalis non est in te.*[24]

[21] Prov. viii, 23, 25.

[22] *Ipsissima verba quibus divinae scripturae de increata Sapientia loquuntur ejusque sempiternas origines repraesentant, consuevit Ecclesia . . . ad illius virginis primordia transferre quae uno eodemque decreto cum divinae Sapientiae incarnatione fuerant praestituta.* Pius X, Bull *Ineffabilis* for the definition of the Immaculate Conception.

[23] Gen. iii, 15.

[24] Antiphon of Vespers for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

"Thy garments are white as snow and thy face like the sun:[25] therefore the King of glory hath ardently desired thee."

Not only is Mary born immaculate, but *grace abounds in her.* When the Angel salutes her, he declares her "full of grace", *Gratia plena*; for the Lord, the source of all grace, is within her: *Dominus tecum.* Then, in the conception and birth of Jesus, *Mary keeps her virginity intact.* She brings forth, while remaining a virgin; as the Church sings, with the honour of virginity, Mary has the joy of motherhood: *Gaudia matris habens cum virginitatis honore.*[26] There are the graces that the hidden life with Jesus brings to Mary; there are those coming from her union with her Son in the mysteries of His public life and of His Passion; and, to fill up the measure, there is her *Assumption into Heaven.* Mary's virginal body, whence Christ took substance of His human nature, is not to know corruption; upon her head is to be placed a crown of inestimable price; she will reign as queen at her Son's right hand, adorned with the vestment of glory woven for her by all these privileges: *Adstitit regina a dextris tuis, in vestitu deaurato.*[27]

Now, whence does Mary derive all these signal graces, all these wonderful privileges, which make her a creature, above every other creature, *Benedicta tu in mulieribus*? From the eternal choice God made of Mary to be the Mother of His Son. If she is "blessed among women"; if, for her, God has set aside so many of the laws He had Himself established, it is because she is to be the Mother of His Son. If you take away this dignity from Mary, all these prerogatives would have no more reason or meaning; for all these privileges prepare or accompany Mary as Mother of God.

But what is incomprehensible is the love which determined this unique choice that the Word made of this young Virgin, in order to take from her a human nature.

Christ *loved* His Mother. Never has God so loved a simple creature; never has son loved his mother as Jesus Christ has done. He has so loved men, He Himself tells us, as to die for them, and He could not give them a greater proof of love: *Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis.*[28] But never forget this truth: Christ above all died for His Mother, to pay for her privileges. The singular graces Mary received are the first fruits of the Passion of Jesus. The Blessed Virgin would not have enjoyed any prerogative without the merits of her Son; she is the greatest glory of Christ because she has received the most from Him.

The Church gives us to understand this doctrine very clearly when

[25] Ibid.
[26] Antiphon of Lauds at Christmas.
[27] Ps. xliv, 10.
[28] Joan. xv, 13.

she celebrates the Immaculate Conception, the first, according to time, of the graces received by the Blessed Virgin. Read the collect for the feast; you will see that this signal privilege is granted to Our Lady because the death of Jesus, foreseen in the eternal decrees, had paid the price of it in advance: *Deus qui per immaculatum Virginis Conceptionem dignum Filio tuo habitaculum praeparasti, concede, quaesumus, ut qui ex morte ejusdem Filii tui* PRAEVISA, *eam ab omni labe praeservasti.* . . . We may say that Mary was the first object, out of all humanity, of the love of Christ, even of the Suffering Christ: it is above all for her, in order that grace might abound in her in a singular measure, that Jesus Christ shed His Precious Blood.

Lastly, Jesus *obeyed* His Mother. You have read how all that the Evangelists tell us of Christ's hidden life at Nazareth, with Mary and Joseph, is that "He was subject to them" and "advanced in wisdom and age".[29] Is there anything incompatible with His Divinity in this? Certainly not. The Word is made Flesh, He has stooped so far as to take a nature like to ours, sin excepted; He came, said He, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister";[30] to be "obedient unto death";[31] that is why He willed to obey His Mother. At Nazareth, He obeyed Mary and Joseph, the two privileged beings whom God had placed near Him. In a certain measure, Mary shares in the authority of the Eternal Father over His Son's Humanity. Jesus could say of His Mother what He said of His Father in Heaven: *Quae placita sunt ei facio sepmer.*[32] "I do always the things that please *her.*"

The Word not only predestined Mary to be His Mother according to His Humanity, He not only gave her, in filling her with grace, the honour belonging to this dignity, but He *associated her in His mysteries.*

We see in the Gospel that Jesus and Mary are inseparable in Christ's mysteries. When the angels announce the Birth of the Saviour in the cave of Bethlehem, the shepherds come and find "Mary . . . and the Infant";[33] it is Mary who presents Jesus in the Temple as a prelude to the Sacrifice of Calvary;[34] all the life at Nazareth, as I have just said, is lived under Mary's authority; it is at her request that Jesus, at the beginning of His public life, reveals Himself by His first miracle at Cana;[35] the Evangelists tell us that she followed Christ in more than one of His apostolic journeys.

But notice, there is not question here of only a simple material union. It is with her heart and soul that Mary enters into the mysteries of her Son. St. Luke tells us that the Mother of Jesus kept all the words of her Son "pondering them in her heart": *Maria autem conservabat omnia*

[29] Luc. ii, 51-52. [30] Matth. xx, 28. [31] Philipp. ii, 8. [32] Joan. viii, 29.
[33] Luc. ii, 8, 16. [34] Ibid. 23, 39. [35] Joan. ii, 1-11.

verba haec, conferens in corde suo.[36] The words of Jesus were sources of contemplation for her; can we not say as much of the mysteries of Jesus? When Christ lived these mysteries He assuredly enlightened the soul of His Mother upon each of them; she understood them, she associated herself in them; all that Our Lord said or did was a source of grace for her. In return for the human life He had received from her, Jesus, so to speak, gave her the Divine life of which He is the source. That is why Christ and His Mother are so indissolubly united in every mystery; and that is also why Mary has united us all in her heart with her Divine Son.

Now the pre-eminent work of Jesus, the Holy of holies of His mysteries, is His Passion; it is by His bloody sacrifice upon the Cross that He achieves the restoration of life to men, that He raises them up again to their dignity as children of God. Christ Jesus willed to make His Mother enter into this mystery by so special a title and Mary united herself so fully to the will of Her Son, our Redeemer, that, while keeping her rank of simple creature, she truly shares with Him the glory of having at that moment brought us forth to the life of grace.

Let us go to Calvary at the moment when Christ Jesus is about to consummate the work that His Father has given Him to do here below. Our Lord has reached the end of His apostolic mission: He is about to reconcile all mankind with His Father. Whom do we find at the foot of the Cross at this supreme instant? Mary, the Mother of Jesus, with John, the beloved disciple, the Magdalen and several other women: *Stabat mater ejus.*[37] Mary is standing there; she has just renewed the offering of her Son—that offering she made when she presented Him in the Temple; at this moment she offers the "blessed fruit of her womb" to the Eternal Father for the ransom of the world. Jesus has only a few minutes to live; then the sacrifice will be accomplished, and Divine grace restored to men. He wills to give us Mary to be our Mother. This is one of the forms of the truth that the Word is united, in the Incarnation, to all humanity, and that the elect form the mystical body of Christ from Whom they cannot be separated. Christ will give us His Mother to be also ours in the spiritual order; Mary will not separate us from Jesus, her Son and our Head.

Then, before expiring and, as St. Paul says, achieving the conquest of the world of souls that He wishes to make His glorious kingdom,[38] Jesus sees, at the foot of the Cross, His Mother, plunged in deep sorrow, and the disciple He so much loved, the same who heard and has related

[36] Luc. ii, 19. [37] Joan. xix, 25.

[38] *Dilexit Ecclesiam et seipsum tradidit pro ea . . . ut exhiberet ipse sibi gloriosam Ecclesiam non habentem maculam.* Ephes. v, 25-27.

to us the Last Words. Jesus says to His Mother: "Woman, behold thy son"; then He says to the disciple: "Behold thy mother."[39] St. John here represents us all; it is to us that Jesus, when dying, bequeathed His Mother. Is He not our "Elder Brother?" Are we not predestined to be like to Him, so that He may be "the Firstborn among many brethren?"[40] Now if Christ has become our Elder Brother in taking from Mary a nature like ours, which makes Him one of our race, is it astonishing that, in dying, He should have given her to be our Mother in the order of grace who was His Mother according to human nature?

And as this utterance, being that of the Eternal Word, is omnipotent and of Divine efficacy, it creates in the heart of St. John filial sentiments worthy of Mary, as it gives birth in the Blessed Virgin's heart to a special tenderness for those whom grace renders brothers of Jesus Christ. Can we doubt for a moment that, for her part, Our Lady responded as at Nazareth with a *Fiat*, a silent one this time, but equally full of love, humility and obedience, in which the plenitude of her will lost itself in that of Jesus, so as to bring about her Son's supreme wish.

St. Gertrude relates that hearing one day, in the chanting of the Divine Office, those words of the Gospel naming Christ: *Primogenitus Mariae Virginis*, "the Firstborn Son of the Virgin Mary", she said to herself: "The title of Only Son would seem to me more befitting for Jesus than that of Firstborn." While she was dwelling on this thought, Mary appeared to her: "No," said she to the holy nun, "it is not 'Only Son' but 'Firstborn Son' which is most befitting; for, after Jesus, my Sweetest Son, or more truly, in Him and by Him, I have given birth to you all in my heart and you have become my children, the brothers and sisters of Jesus."[41]

III

In order to acknowledge the unique place Jesus has willed to give Mary in His mysteries and the love of the Blessed Virgin for us, we should give her the honour, love and confidence due to her as the Mother of Jesus and our Mother.

How can we fail to love her if we love Our Lord? If Christ Jesus wishes us, as I have said, to love all the members of His Mystical Body, how can we do otherwise than give the first place in that love to the one who gave Him that human nature by which He became our Head,

[39] Joan. xix, 25-27. [40] Rom. viii, 29.
[41] *The Herald of Divine Love*. Book IV, chap. 3.

that Humanity which is the instrument He uses to communicate grace to us? We cannot doubt that the love we show to the Mother of Jesus is extremely pleasing to Christ. If we want to love Christ, if we want Him to be everything to us, we must have a very special love for His Mother.

In what way shall we manifest this love? Jesus, as God, loved His Mother and heaped sublime privileges upon her; we shall show our love by exalting these privileges; if we wish to be greatly pleasing to Our Lord, let us admire the marvellous gifts with which, through love, He has adorned the soul of His Mother. He wills that, with her, we should render unceasing thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity for these graces, and that we should praise Our Lady herself for having been chosen from among all women to give a Saviour to the world. By this, we shall truly enter into the feelings which Jesus had for her to whom He owes it that He is the Son of man. Yes, we shall sing to her: "thou alone hast ravished the Heart of thy God"; *Sola sine exemplo placuisti Domino*;[42] thou art blessed among all creatures; blessed because thou didst believe in the Divine word and in thee are fulfilled the eternal promises.

To be helped in this devotion, we have only to see what the Church does. See how the Bride of Christ has multiplied here below her testimonies in honour of Mary, and how she observes that worship which is called *hyperdulia* since it transcends the worship of all the other saints.[43]

The Church has consecrated numerous feasts to the Mother of God: she celebrates in turn her Immaculate Conception, her Presentation in the Temple, the Annunciation, Visitation, Purification and Assumption.

See, too, how at each of the principal seasons of the liturgical cycle, she consecrates to the Blessed Virgin a special antiphon, which is to be recited daily at the end of the Canonical Hours by all who are bound to the Divine Office. You will notice how in each of these Antiphons, the Church delights in recalling the privilege of the Divine Motherhood, the foundation of all Mary's greatness. "Fruitful Mother of the Redeemer," we sing during Advent and Christmastide, "thou hast to the astonishment of nature, given birth to thy Creator; Virgin in thy Conception, thou didst after child-bearing remain a Virgin; Mother of God, intercede for us." During Lent, we salute her as "the root of which Christ is the flower, and as the gate through which light has arisen upon the world". At Eastertide, it is a hymn of gladness; we

[42] Antiphon of the *Benedictus* for the office of the Blessed Virgin *in Sabbato*.

[43] To all the saints, we owe the homage of *dulia*, a Greek word meaning *service;* the Mother of the Incarnate Word, merits, because of her eminent dignity, altogether special homage which is expressed by the word *hyperdulia*.

congratulate Mary on the triumph of her Son; we recall to her the joy that inundated her soul at the dawning of this glory. "Queen of Heaven, rejoice, He *Whom thou didst bear*, hath arisen; yea, rejoice and exult, O Virgin, for Christ the Lord hath truly arisen, glorious and living from the tomb." Then, during the time after Pentecost, symbolizing the time of our pilgrimage here below, it is the *Salve Regina*, full of confidence: "Mother of Mercy, our hope and our salvation, to thee do we sigh in this valley of tears. . . . Show unto us after this exile, *Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb*. Pray for us, *Holy Mother of God*, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ." Thus, there is not a single day on which the voice of the Church is not uplifted to congratulate Mary on her graces and remind her that we are her children.

Is this all? No. Every day at Vespers, the Church sings the *Magnificat*; she unites with the Virgin herself in praising God for His bountiful goodness to the Mother of His Son. Let us often say after Our Lady and with the Church: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour . . . for He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden. . . . Henceforth, O Mary, all nations shall call thee blessed, for He that is mighty hath done great things in thee." When we sing these words, it is a song of gratitude we offer to the Holy Trinity for Mary's privileges as if these privileges were ours.

There is also the "Little Office" of the Blessed Virgin; there is the Rosary so pleasing to Mary because in it we always praise her united with her Divine Son, by ever lovingly repeating the salutation that the heavenly messenger addressed to her on the day of the Incarnation: *Ave Maria, gratia plena*. It is an excellent "practice" to recite the rosary devoutly every day; thus to contemplate Christ in His mysteries so as to unite ourselves to Him; to congratulate Mary on having been so closely associated in these mysteries and return thanks to the Holy Trinity for her privileges. Then, if each day we have often said to her: "Mother of God, pray for us . . . now and at the hour of our death", we may be sure that, when the moment comes at which *nunc* and the *hora mortis nostrae* will be one and the same, the Blessed Virgin will not forsake us. Again there is the Litany of Our Lady; there is the *Angelus*, by which we renew in her heart the ineffable joy she must have felt at the moment of the Incarnation. There are besides many other forms of devotion.

It is not necessary to overburden ourselves with "practices"; let us choose some, and once the choice is made let us remain faithful to them; this daily homage offered to His Mother will be most acceptable to Our Lord.

IV

Besides being extremely acceptable to Jesus Christ, this devotion to the Blessed Virgin is *very profitable* for us, and this for three reasons which you will have already foreseen.

First of all, because, in the Divine plan, *Mary is inseparable from Jesus*, and our holiness consists in entering as far as we can into the Divine economy. In God's eternal thoughts, Mary belongs indeed to the very essence of the mystery of Christ; Mother of Jesus, she is the Mother of Him in whom we find every thing. According to the Divine plan, life is only given to mankind through Christ the Man-God: *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me*,[44] but Christ is given to the world only through Mary: *Propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem, descendit de caelis et incarnatus est . . . ex Maria Virgine*.[45] This is the Divine order and it is unchanging. Remark that this order was not meant only for the day when the Incarnation took place; it still continues as regards the application of the fruits of the Incarnation to souls. Why is this? Because the source of grace is Christ, the Incarnate Word; but as Christ, as Mediator. He remains inseparable from the human nature which He took from Mary.[46]

The second reason, which is very closely related to the preceding, is that no one has more influence than the Mother of God *in obtaining grace for us*. In consequence of the Incarnation, God is pleased to recognize the credit of those who are united to Jesus, the Head of the Mystical Body (not however in such a manner as to derogate from the power of His Son's mediation, but on the contrary to extend and exalt it). This credit is so much the more powerful according as the union of the saints with Christ is the more intimate.

"The nearer a thing approaches to its principle," says St. Thomas, "the more it experiences the effects produced by this principle. The nearer you come to a furnace, the more you feel the heat which radiates

[44] Joan. xiv, 16. [45] *Credo* of the Mass.

[46] "God having once willed to give Jesus Christ to us by the Blessed Virgin, and the gifts of God being without repentance, this order never changes. It is and ever will be true that having received through her charity the universal principle of all grace, it is still through her that we receive the divers applications of grace in all the different states which compose the Christian life. Her maternal love having contributed so much to our salvation in the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the universal principle of grace, she will eternally contribute to it in all the other operations which are only dependent on this mystery." Bossuet, *Sermon for the Feast of the Conception*, 1669. Let us likewise quote these words of Pope Leo XIII: "Of the magnificent treasure of grace brought to us by Christ, nothing, *according to the eternal designs*, is to be distributed to us except through Mary. Hence, it is through her we must go to Christ, almost in the same way as through Christ we approach our Heavenly Father." *Encycl. on the Rosary*, Sept. 22, 1891.

from it." The holy doctor adds: "Now, Christ is the principle of grace since, as God, He is the Author of it, and, as Man, He is the instrument of it; and the Blessed Virgin being the nearest of any creature to the Humanity of Christ, Christ having taken this human nature from her, she has received from Him higher graces than any creature.

"But each one receives from God (it is still St. Thomas who is speaking) grace proportionate to his providential destination. As Man, Christ was predestined and elected in order that, being the Son of God, He might have power to sanctify all men. *In virtute sanctificandi*; therefore He, and He alone, was to possess such plenitude that it might overflow on all souls: *De plenitudine ejus omnes nos accepimus.* The fulness of grace received by the Blessed Virgin had for its end to bring her nearer than any other creature to the Author of grace; so near, indeed, that she enclosed in her womb the One Who is full of grace, and in giving Him to the world by bringing Him forth, she, so to speak, gave grace itself to the world, because she gave Him Who is the source of it": *Ut eum, qui est plenus omni gratia, pariendo, quodammodo gratiam ad omnes derivaret.*[47] In giving us Jesus, Mary has given us the very Author of life. The Church sings this in the prayer after the antiphon to the Blessed Virgin, during Christmastide, when celebrating Christ's Birth. *Per quam meruimus auctorem vitae suscipere*, "By whom we have been made worthy to receive the Author of life"; and the Church invites the redeemed nations to hymn, in exultation, the Life which this virginal Motherhood has brought to them:

Vitam datam per Virginem
Gentes redemptae plaudite.

If, therefore, you wish to draw largely from the fountain of Divine life, go to Mary; ask her to lead you to this fountain; she it is, indeed, more than any other creature, who will bring you near to Jesus. That is why we so justly name her: *Mater divinae gratiae*, "Mother of Divine grace"; again that is why the Church applies to her this passage of the Scriptures: "He that shall find me, shall find life, and he shall have salvation from the Lord", *Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam et hauriet salutem a Domino.*[48] Salvation, the life of our souls, only comes from the Lord Jesus, a *Domino*, He alone is the one Mediator—but who more surely than Mary will lead us to Him, who will have more power to render Him propitious to us than His Mother?

She has, moreover, received from Jesus Himself a *special grace of maternity* towards His mystical body. That is the last reason why

[47] III, q. xxvii, a. 5. [48] Prov. viii, 35.

devotion to the Blessed Virgin is so profitable for our souls. Christ, having received human nature from Mary, has associated His Mother, as I have said, with all His mysteries from the offering in the Temple to the immolation on Calvary. Now, what is the end of all Christ's mysteries? To make of Him the example of all our supernatural life, the ransom for our sanctification and the source of all our holiness; to create for Him an eternal and glorious fellowship of brethren like unto Himself. That is why Mary, like a new Eve, is associated with the new Adam; but, much more truly than Eve, Mary is "the Mother of all the living",[49] the Mother of all who live by the grace of her Son.

This association was not only outward. Christ, being God, being the omnipotent Word, created in the soul of His Mother the feelings she was to have towards those who being born of her and living by His mysteries, He willed to constitute His brethren. The Blessed Virgin, for her part, enlightened by the grace abounding in her, responded to this call of Jesus by a *Fiat* of entire submission and in union of spirit with her Divine Son. In giving her consent to the Divine proposition of the Incarnation, she accepted to enter into the plan of the Redemption in a unique capacity; she accepted, not only to be the Mother of Jesus, but to be associated in all the mission of the Redeemer. To each of these mysteries of Jesus, she had to renew this *Fiat* full of love until the moment when she was able to say: "All is consummated", after having offered at Calvary, for the world's salvation, this Jesus, this Son, this Body she had formed, this Blood which was her own. At this blessed hour, Mary entered so deeply into the mind of Jesus that she may truly be called Co-Redemptress. Like Jesus, she, at this moment, achieved the act of love of bringing us forth to the life of grace.[50] Mother of our Head, according to the thought of St. Augustine, in bearing Him corporally, she became spiritually the Mother of all the members of this Divine Head: *Corpore mater capitis nostri, spiritu mater membrorum ejus.*[51]

And because here below she is thus associated in all the mysteries of our Redemption, Jesus has crowned her not only with glory, but with power. He has placed His Mother at His right hand that she may dispose of the treasures of eternal life by a unique title—that of Mother of God: *Adstitit regina a dextris tuis.*[52] This is what Christian piety means when it proclaims the Mother of Jesus: *Omnipotentia supplex.*

Full of confidence, let us then say to her with the Church: "Show

[49] Gen. ii, 20.

[50] *Cooperata est caritate ut fideles in Ecclesia nascerentur.* St. Aug. *De sancta Virginitate,* n. 6.

[51] St. Aug. *De sancta Virginitate,* n. 6. [52] Ps. xliv, 10.

thyself a Mother: Mother of Jesus by thy influence with Him; our Mother by mercy towards us. May Christ receive our prayers through thee, this Christ Who, born of thee to bring us life, willed to be thy Son."

Monstra te esse Matrem,
Sumat per te preces
Qui pro nobis natus
Tulit esse tuus.[53]

Who, indeed, better than she knows the Heart of her Son? We find in the Gospel[54] a splendid example of her confidence in Jesus. It is at the feast at Cana. She is there with Jesus and she is not so absorbed in contemplation as to know nothing of what is passing around her. The wine begins to fail. Mary notices the confusion of her hosts; she says to Jesus: "They have no wine." *Vinum non habent.* We here recognize the heart of a mother. What of those "mystics" who would not have wanted to think of the wine! And yet what are they in comparison with the Blessed Virgin? Urged by her kindness, she asks her Son to come to the aid of those whose embarrassment she sees. Our Lord looks upon her and only says: *Quid mihi et tibi est, mulier?* But she knows her Jesus. She is so sure of Him that she says at once to the servant: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye", *Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite.* And indeed, at the word of Christ, the amphorae are found to be filled with excellent wine.

What shall we ask of the Mother of Jesus, if not that, before and above all, she will form Jesus within us by communicating her faith and love to us?

All Christian life consists in forming Christ within us and making Him live in us. This is the idea of St. Paul.[55] Now where was Christ first formed? In the Virgin's bosom, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. But, say the Holy Fathers, Mary first bore Jesus by faith and love, when, by her *Fiat*, she gave the awaited consent: *Prius concepit mente quam corpore.*[56] Let us ask of her to obtain for us this faith that will make Jesus dwell in us: *Christum habitare per fidem in cordibus vestris*; this love which will make us live by the life of Jesus. Let us ask of her that we may become like to her Son; there is no greater favour we can ask her; neither is there any she more wishes to grant us. For she knows, she sees that her Son cannot be separated from His mystical

[53] Hymn. *Ave maris stella.* [54] Joan. ii, 1 seq. [55] Gal. iv, 19.
[56] St. Aug. *De Virgin.* c. 3; *Sermo* ccxv, n. 4; S. Leo, *Sermo I de nativitate Domini*, c. 1; St. Bernard, *Sermo I de Vigilia nativit.*

body; she remains so united in heart and soul to her Divine Son that, now in glory, she only desires one thing, and this is that the Church, the kingdom of the elect, bought with the Blood of Jesus, should appear before Him, as a "glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle, but . . . holy and without blemish".[57]

Therefore, when we speak to the Blessed Virgin, let us do so united with Jesus and say: "O Mother of the Incarnate Word, your Son has said: "All that you do to the least of Mine, you do it unto Me. I am one of the least of the members of your Son Jesus; it is in His name I come before you to implore your help." In refusing petitions thus made, Mary would be refusing Jesus something.

Let us, then, go to her, but let it be with confidence. There are souls who go to her as to a Mother, confiding to her their interests, laying before her their sorrows and difficulties, having recourse to her in all their needs and temptations, for eternal enemity exists between the Virgin and the devil; with her heel, Mary crushes the head of the infernal serpent.[58] On every occasion, such souls as I have spoken of deal with the Blessed Virgin as children with a Mother; they will go before one of her statues to tell her what they want. But this is childishness, you may say. Perhaps it is, but has not Christ said: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?"[59]

Let us, moreover, ask Our Lady that, from the Humanity of her Jesus Who possesses the fulness of grace, grace may be poured forth abundantly upon us, so that by love we may become more and more conformed to this beloved Son of the Father, Who is also her Son. It is the best request we can make her. At the Last Supper, Our Lord said to His disciples: "The Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God."[60] He could say the same to us of Mary: "My Mother loveth you, because you love Me, and believe that I was born of her." Nothing pleases Mary more than to hear it proclaimed that Jesus is her Son, and to see Him beloved by all creatures.

The Gospel, as you know, has only preserved a very few words of the Blessed Virgin. I have just reminded you of one of these words, that which was said to the servants at the marriage feast at Cana: "Whatsoever my Son shall say to you, do ye", *Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite*.[61] This word is like an echo of the word of the Eternal Father: "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear

[57] Ephes. v, 27. [58] Gen. iii, 15. [59] Matth. xviii, 13.
[60] Joan. xvi, 27. [61] Ibid. ii, 5.

ye Him": *Ipsum audite*.[62] We can apply to ourselves this word of Mary: "Do all that my Son shall say to you." That will be the best fruit of this conference; it will be, too, the best form our devotion towards the Mother of Jesus can take. The Virgin Mother has no greater wish than to see her Divine Son obeyed, loved, glorified and exalted. Jesus is the Son in whom she, like the Eternal Father, is well pleased.

[62] Matth. xvii, 5; cf. II Pet. i, 17.

XIII. *COHEREDES CHRISTI*

SUMMARY. The heavenly heritage, the final term of our adoptive predestination. I. Eternal *beatitude* consists in the face to face *vision of God,* unchanging *love* and perfect *joy*. II. *The bodies* of the just will share, *after the resurrection*, in this beatitude; the glory of *this resurrection* already *realized in Christ*, the Head of His Mystical Body. III. The *degree of our beatitude* is fixed here below by the measure of our grace; how St. Paul exhorted the faithful to *progress* in the exercise of the supernatural life *"until the day of Christ"*.

"I HAVE glorified Thee on earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee. . . . Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me; that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me."[1]

These words form the beginning and the end of the ineffable prayer that Jesus addressed to His Father at the Last Supper, when about to crown His mission of salvation upon earth by His redeeming Sacrifice.

Christ Jesus first asks that His Sacred Humanity may share in that glory which the Word possesses from all eternity. Then, as Christ never separates Himself from His mystical body, He asks that His disciples and all those who shall believe in Him, may be associated with Him in that glory. It is His will that we should be "where He is". And where is He? *In gloria Dei Patris:* "in the glory of God the Father".[2] There is the final term of our predestination, the consummation of our adoption, the summit of our perfection, the plenitude of our life.

Let us hear how St. Paul sets forth this truth. After having said that God, Who wills us to be holy, has predestinated us to be made comformable to the image of His Son, in order that this Son may be the Firstborn amongst many brethren, He immediately adds: "And whom He predestinated, them He also called. And whom He called, them He also justified. And whom He justified, them He also glorified."[3] These words point out the successive phases of the work of our sancti-

[1] Joan. xvii, 4, 24. [2] Philipp. ii, 11. [3] Rom. viii, 30.

fication: namely, our predestination and vocation in Christ Jesus, our justification by grace, which makes us the children of God, and our supreme glorification assuring eternal life to us.

We have seen God's plan for us; how Baptism is the sign of our supernatural vocation, the Sacrament of our Christian initiation, and how we are justified, that is to say, rendered just, by the grace of Christ. This justification can go on being made more and more perfect, according to the degree of our union with Jesus Christ, until it finds its final term in glory. *Quos justificavit, illos et glorificavit.* Glory is this Divine inheritance which comes to us from the fact of our being the children of God: *Si filii et heredes, heredes Dei*; an inheritance Christ has merited to give us, which He Himself already possesses, and wills to share with us: co*heredes autem Christi.*[4] The same inheritance which is Christ's is to become ours—eternal life, glory and beatitude in the possession of God. The term of the Divine life in us is not to be found here on earth. It is, as Jesus says, with the Father: *apud te . . . in gloria Patris.*

It is fitting, therefore, that in ending these conferences upon the life of Christ in us, we should cast our gaze upon this eternal inheritance that our Lord has asked His Father to give us. We should often think of it, for it is the final aim of all the work of Christ.

Veni ut vitam habeant: "I am come that they may have life." But the only true life is that which is eternal. All our knowledge and all our love of the Father and His Son Jesus must tend to the eternity of that life which makes us children of God. *Haec est* VITA AETERNA *ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum et quem misisti Jesum Christum.*[5] Here on earth it is always possible for us to lose the Divine life which Christ gives us through grace; only death "in the Lord" fixes and assures this life in us in a permanent manner. The Church notes this truth in calling the day on which the Saints enter into eternal possession of this life their "birthday": *Natalitia.*[6] The life of Christ in us here below by grace is like the dawn of day; it only attains its noon-tide—a noon-tide without decline—if it comes to its fulness in glory. Baptism is the source whence the Divine river rises; but this river, which makes glad the city of souls, flows at last into the ocean of eternity. That is why we shall only have an incomplete idea of the life of Christ in our souls if we do not contemplate the end which, of its nature, it must reach.

You know how earnestly St. Paul prayed for the faithful of Ephesus that they might understand the mystery of Christ, and that it might be

[4] Ibid. 17. [5] Joan. xvii, 3.
[6] For example in the *Oremus* for the feast of St. Prisca. (January 18th).

granted them to comprehend its sublimity and depth.[7] But the great Apostle is also careful to point out that this mystery is only crowned in eternity, and that is why he ardently desires that this thought should occupy the minds of his disciples. "I do not cease," he writes to them, "to make commemoration of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may enlighten the eyes of your heart that you may know what is the hope of your calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." *Ut sciatis quae sit spes vocationis ejus et quae divitiae gloriae hereditatis ejus in sanctis.*[8]

Let us then see what is this "hope", what are these "riches" that St. Paul so much wished should be known. Yet did he not say himself that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him?"[9] This is true. All that we can say of these "riches of the glory of our inheritance" will fall short of the reality. Revelation, however, teaches us something of this. We can comprehend it if we have the Spirit of Jesus, for, says St. Paul in the same place, "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . Now we have received . . . (at Baptism) the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God", the marvels of His grace,[10] the dawn of glory. Let us then listen to this Revelation, but with faith, not with the senses, for here, all is supernatural.

I

Speaking of the theological virtues which accompany sanctifying grace and are like the sources of supernatural activity in a child of God, St. Paul says that in our present state on earth remain these three virtues, "faith, hope and charity"; but he adds, "the greatest of these is charity".[11] And why is this? Because at the heavenly term of our adoption, faith in God gives place to the vision of God, hope vanishes in the possession of God, but love remains and unites us to God for ever.

The glorification which awaits us and will be ours consists in this: We shall see God, we shall love God, we shall enjoy God. These acts constitute eternal life, the assured and full participation in the very life of God, and thence the beatitude of the soul, a beatitude in which the body is to share after the resurrection.

[7] Ephes. iii, 14, 18. [8] Ibid. i, 16-18. [9] I Cor. ii, 9.
[10] Ibid. 10, 12. [11] Ibid. xiii, 13.

In Heaven we shall *see* God. To see God as He sees Himself is the first element in this participation in the Divine nature that constitutes the life of blessedness. It is the first vital act in glory. Here below, as St. Paul tells us, we only know God by faith, in a dim manner, but then "face to face". "Now," he says, "I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known."[12] What this vision is in itself, we cannot know now, but the soul will be confirmed in grace by "the light of glory" which is the unfolding of grace in heaven. We shall see God with all His perfections; or, rather, we shall see that all His perfections are but one infinite perfection, which is the Divinity. We shall contemplate the inner life of God. We shall enter, as St. John says, into fellowship with the Holy and Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[13] We shall contemplate the fulness of Being, the fulness of all truth, of all holiness, all beauty and all goodness. We shall contemplate, and that for ever, the Humanity of the Incarnate Word; we shall see Jesus Christ, in Whom the Father is infinitely well pleased; we shall see Him Who has willed to become our "Elder Brother": we shall contemplate the Divine features, henceforward glorious, of Him Who has delivered us from death by His bitter Passion, Who has given us to live this immortal life. To Him we shall sing the song of gratitude: "Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, in Thy Blood, and hast established us in Thy Kingdom; to Thee be praise and glory."[14] We shall see the Blessed Virgin Mary, the choirs of angels, all that multitude of the elect which St. John declared to be innumerable, surrounding the throne of God.

This vision of God, unveiled and clear, and without intermediary, is our future inheritance; it is the consummation of our Divine adoption. "The adoption of the sons of God," says St. Thomas,[15] "consists of a certain conformity of similtude to the image of Him Who is His Son by nature."[16] This conformity is brought about in a two-fold manner: here below by grace, *per gratiam viae*, which is imperfect conformity, according to the words of St. John: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him because we shall see Him as He is."[17] Here below, then, our Divine resemblance is not complete, but in Heaven it will appear in its perfection. Here below, we have to work in the dim light of faith, to render ourselves like to God; to destroy the "old man", and to allow the "new man" created in the image of Jesus Christ,[18] to increase in

[12] I Cor. xiii, 12. [13] I Joan. i, 3. [14] Apoc. v, 9-10, and 13.
[15] III, q. xlv, a. 4.
[16] *Praedestinavit nos conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.* Rom. viii, 29.
[17] I Joan. iii, 2. [18] Col. iii, 9-10; Cf. Ephes. iv, 22 and 24.

newness of life. We must ever become more perfect, that we may attain a closer resemblance to the Divine Model. In Heaven our resemblance to Christ will be consummated; we shall realize that we are truly the children of God.

But this vision will not constitute us in a state of immobility like a statue. The contemplation of God will not be the annihilation of our activity. While not ceasing for an instant to contemplate the Divinity, our soul will keep the full play of all its faculties. Let us look at Our Lord Jesus Christ. Here upon earth, His blessed soul constantly enjoyed the Beatific Vision, and yet His human activity was not absorbed by this continual contemplation. It remained intact, and was manifested by His apostolic journeys, by preaching and miracles. The perfection of Heaven would no longer be a perfection if it were to annihilate the activity of the elect.

We shall *see* God. Is that all? No; to see God is the first element of eternal life, the first source of beatitude, but if the intelligence is divinely satisfied by the Eternal Truth, must not the will also be so by the Infinite Goodness? We shall love God.[19] "Charity," says St. Paul, "never falleth away."[20] We shall love God, no longer with a weak, vacillating love, so often turned aside by creatures, and exposed to fall away, but with a love that is powerful and pure, perfect and eternal. In this vale of tears where we must painfully struggle to preserve the life of Christ in us, love is already so strong and intense in certain souls as to draw from them such words as those of the Apostle: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or persecution? . . . neither death nor life . . . nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God." What then will this love be when it embraces, never more to lose it, the Infinite Good? What loving aspirations towards God ceaselessly satisfied! And this unending love will express itself in acts of adoration, complacency and thanksgiving. St. John shows us the saints prostrating themselves before God, and making Heaven resound with their praise: "Glory, honour and power to our God for ever and ever."[21] That is the expression of their love.

Finally, we shall *enjoy* God. You have read in the Gospel how Our Lord Himself compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a wedding feast

[19] According to St. Thomas (I-II, q. iii, a. 4), beatitude consists essentially in the possession of God contemplated face to face. This Beatific Vision is, above all, an act of intelligence. From this possession of God by the intelligence proceeds, as a property, the beatitude of the will which finds its complete satisfaction and repose in the possession of the beloved object rendered present by the intelligence.

[20] I Cor. xiii, 8. [21] Apoc. vii, 12.

that God has prepared to honour His Son. "He will gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and passing, will minister to them."[22] What does this signify if not that God will be our joy? The Psalmist exclaims: "(Thy elect) shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house: and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life." *Quoniam apud te est* FONS VITAE.[23] God says to the soul that seeks Him: "I Myself will be thy reward exceeding great." *Ego ero merces tua magna nimis.*[24] It is as if He said: "I have loved thee so much that I have not willed to give thee a natural bliss: I have willed to bring thee into My own house, to adopt thee as My child, that thou mayest partake of My beatitude. It is My will that thou shouldst live of My very life, that My beatitude should become thine. Here below, I have given thee My Son; become mortal by His Humanity, He delivered Himself up to merit for thee the grace of being and remaining My child. He has given Himself to thee in the Eucharist under the veil of faith; now, it is I in glory Who give Myself to thee to make thee share in My life, and to be thy endless beatitude." *Seipsum dabit quia seipsum dedit; seipsum dabit immortalibus immortalem, quia seipsum dedit mortalibus mortalem.*[25] Grace here below, glory above; but it is the same God Who gives us both and, as I have said, glory is only the unfolding of grace: the Divine adoption, on earth, is hidden and imperfect, in Heaven it is revealed and consummated.

This is why the Psalmist so longed and thirsted after the possession of God: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God." *Sitivit anima mea ad Deum* VIVUM.[26] "For I shall be satisfied when Thy glory, shall appear." *Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua.*[27]

Again when Our Lord speaks of this beatitude, He tells us how God bids His faithful servant enter into the joy of his Lord.[28] This joy is the joy of God Himself, the joy that He possesses in the knowledge of His infinite perfections, the beatitude that God has in the ineffable society of the Three Persons; the infinite repose and satisfaction wherein He dwells. His joy will be ours: *Ut habeant gaudium meum impletum in semetipsis.*[29] His beatitude and His repose will also be ours. His life, our life—perfect life in which all our faculties will be perfectly satisfied.

There we shall find that "entire participation in the unchanging

[22] Luc. xii, 37. [23] Ps. xxxv, 9. [24] Gen. xv, 1.
[25] St. Aug. *Enarr. in Ps.* xlii, 2. [26] Ps. xli, 1-3.
[27] Ibid. xvi, 15. [28] Matth. xxv, 21. [29] Joan. xvii, 13.

good" as St. Augustine excellently calls it: *Plena participatio incommutabilis boni.*[30] Even to this extent God has loved us. Oh! if we knew what God has reserved for them that love Him! . . .

And because this beatitude and this life are those of God Himself, they will be eternal. "Death shall be no more", says St. John, "nor mourning nor crying nor sorrow shall be any more . . . and God shall wipe away all tears,"[31] from the eyes of those who enter into His joy. We shall be always with the Lord: *Semper cum Domino erimus.*[32] There where He is, we shall be.

Hear in what forcible terms Jesus has given us this assurance. He says of those who are His sheep: "I give them life everlasting; and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand. That which My Father hath given Me is greater than all; and no one can snatch them out of the hand of My Father. I and the Father are one."[33] What confidence Jesus Christ gives us! "You now indeed have sorrow", He said to His disciples, "but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you": *Et gaudium vestrum nemo tollet a vobis.*[34] Let us say to Him like the Samaritan woman: O Lord Jesus, Divine Master, Redeemer of our souls, Elder Brother, give us of this Divine, life-giving water, that we may never thirst;[35] grant to us here below to remain united to Thee by grace so that one day we may be where Thou art, to behold the glory of Thy Humanity, as Thou didst pray the Father for us,[36] and enjoy Thee for ever in Thy Kingdom!

II

As you know, this life of blessedness becomes the portion of every soul as soon as it goes forth from this world, if it is, by grace, a child of God, and if nothing more remains of the penalty of sin to be expiated in Purgatory. However, this is not all. God reserves something yet more for us. Can it be that the soul is not wholly filled with joy? Truly it is, but God wishes to give the body also its beatitude, when the end of time shall bring the resurrection.

The resurrection of the dead is a dogma of faith: *Credo . . . carnis resurrectionem . . . vitam aeternam.* Our Lord has promised it to us: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."[37]

[30] *Epist. ad Honorat.* cxi, 31. [31] Apoc. xxi, 4. [32] I Thess. iv, 16.
[33] Joan. x, 18-30. [34] Ibid. xvi, 22. [35] Joan. iv, 15.
[36] Ibid. xvii, 24-26. [37] Ibid. vi, 55 and xi, 25.

Furthermore, Christ Himself has already risen, and coming forth victorious and living from the tomb, has, by so doing, raised us up with Him. As I have often said to you, the Word, on becoming Incarnate, mystically united Himself to all humanity, and He forms, with His elect, a body of which He is the Head. If our Head is risen again, not only shall we one day rise again with Him, but on the day of His triumph, He already raised up, in principle, and by right, all who believe in Him. . . . See how clearly St. Paul sets forth this doctrine: "God (Who is rich in mercy) for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us . . . hath quickened us together in Christ; and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus." *Deus . . . conresuscitavit nos et consedere fecit nos in caelestibus in Christo Jesu.*[38] God loves us so much in His Son, Jesus, that He will not separate us from Him. He wills us to be like to Him, that we may share His glory, not only as to the soul but also as to the body.

Well might the great Apostle say that God is rich in mercy, and loves us with an exceeding charity! It is not enough for God to satisfy our souls with eternal happiness. It is His Will that our bodies, like that of His Son, should share in this endless beatitude. He wills to adorn them with those glorious prerogatives of immortality, agility and spirituality with which the Humanity of Jesus was resplendent on coming forth from the tomb. Yes, the day will come when we shall all rise again, "everyone in his own order"; Christ has risen the first, being the Head of the elect and the first-fruits of the harvest; next all those will rise again who are His by grace.[39] "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ, all shall be made alive. . . . Afterwards the end when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom (won by his Blood) to God and the Father. . . . He must reign until He hath put all things under His feet, and the enemy death shall be destroyed last . . . and when all things shall be subdued unto Him; then the Son also Himself (in His Humanity) shall be subject unto Him that put all things under His feet, that God may be all in all."[40] Jesus Christ overcame death on the day of His Resurrection. "O death, where is thy victory?"[41] He will again overcome death in His chosen ones at the final resurrection.

Then His work as Chief and Head of the Church will be achieved, entirely consummated. Christ will possess this Church for which He delivered Himself up, that she might be glorious "not having spot or wrinkle . . . but . . . holy and without blemish".[42] The Mystical

[38] Ephes. ii, 4-6.

[39] The damned will likewise rise again, but without the glorious prerogatives of the elect; their bodies will be for ever subject to eternal suffering.

[40] I Cor. xv, 22-28. [41] Ibid. 55. [42] Ephes. v, 27.

Body will have wholly come "unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ".[43] Then Jesus Christ will present to His Father that multitude of the elect of whom He is the Elder Brother. What a glorious sight it will be to see this kingdom subject to Jesus, to contemplate the work of His Blood and His grace, offered by Christ Himself to the glory of His Father! . . . What ineffable beatitude to belong to this kingdom together with the Blessed Virgin, the Angels, the elect, the blessed souls we have known here below, with whom we have been united by ties of blood, or by holy affection! Then Jesus will be able to say in all truth to His Father: "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." The wish manifested by His Sacred Heart at the Last Supper will be fulfilled: "Father . . . I pray for them whom Thou hast given Me . . . that they may have My joy filled in themselves . . . that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be; that they may see My glory . . . that the love wherewith Thou has loved Me may be in them."[44] The Church triumphant will contemplate the glory of her Head; she herself will be filled with the fulness of joy. Divine, eternal life will flow forth from Christ into each one of us, and we shall reign for ever with Him.

St. John, in His Apocalypse, has described something of the glory of this kingdom: "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying: Alleluia: for the Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb (Who is Christ) is come and His spouse (the henceforward triumphant Church) hath prepared herself, and it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen glittering and white." This fine linen, adds St. John, is "the justification of the saints". And the Angel said to him: "Write: Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! . . ."[45]

This is only a shadow of the Divine reality of the beatitude awaiting us. We received the germ of it at Baptism. But this germ needs to grow, to develop, to be secured against briars and stones; by penance we have put away from it all that could destroy or diminish its growth; we have maintained it by the Sacrament of life, and by the practice of the virtues. This Divine life communicated to us by Christ now remains hidden in us: *Vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo,*[46] but in Heaven it is revealed, its splendour appears, its beauty is manifested. And never forget that, arrived at its efflorescence, it will not know any more growth, its splendour will increase no more, its beauty

[43] Ibid. iv, 13. [44] Joan. xvii, 4, 9, 13, 24, 26. [45] Apoc. xix, 6-9.
[46] Col. iii, 3.

reach no higher perfection. Faith tells us that here below is the place of labour, and of merit, that Heaven is the term; there no more growth will be possible: there is the reward after the struggle. "He who believes, gathers up merits; he who sees, enjoys the recompense": *Credenti colligitur meritum, videnti redditur praemium.*[47]

III

There is yet something more. We shall enjoy God according to the measure of grace that we have attained at the moment of our going out of the world.[48]

Do not let us lose sight of this truth: the degree of our eternal beatitude is and will remain fixed for ever by the degree of charity we have attained, by the grace of Christ, when God shall call us to Himself. Each moment of our life is then infinitely precious, for it suffices to advance us a degree in the love of God, to raise us higher in the beatitude of eternal life.

And let us not say that one degree more or less is a small matter. How can anything be a small matter when it concerns God, and the endless life and beatitude of which He is the source? If, according to the parable spoken by Our Lord in person, we have received five talents, it was not that we might bury them, but that we might make them bear increase.[49] And if God measures the reward according to the efforts we have made to live by His grace and increase it in us, do not think it matters little what kind of a harvest we bring to our Father in Heaven. Jesus Himself has told us that His Heavenly Father is glorified in seeing us abound, by His grace, in fruits of holiness, which will be fruits of beatitude in heaven. *In hoc clarificatus est Pater meus ut fructum plurimum afferatis.*[50] This is so true that Christ compares His Father to a vine-dresser Who prunes us by suffering in order that we bear much fruit: *Ut fructum plus afferat.*[51] Can it be that our love for Jesus Christ is so weak that we account it a small thing to be a more or less resplendent member of His Mystical Body in the heavenly Jerusalem. The holier we become, the more we shall glorify God during all eternity, the greater will be our part in that song of thanksgiving sung by the elect to Christ the Redeemer: *Redemisti nos, Domine.*

Let us then be vigilant ever to put away from us the obstacles that might lessen our union with Jesus Christ; to let the Divine action penetrate us deeply, and the grace of Jesus act so freely within us that

[47] St. Aug. *In Joan.* lxviii, 3.
[48] *Unusquisque propriam mercedem accipiet secundum suum laborem.* I Cor. iii, 8.
[49] Matth. xxv, 14-30. [50] Joan. xv, 8. [51] Ibid. 2.

we may "come to the fulness of the age of Christ". Hear the pressing exhortation that St. Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven, made to his dear Philippians: "For God is my witness how I long after you all in the Heart of Jesus Christ. And this I pray that your charity may more and more abound . . . that you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ; filled with the fruits of justice, through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and the praise of God": *Et hoc oro ut caritas vestra magis ac magis abundet ut sitis . . . repleti fructu justitiae per Jesum Christum, in gloriam et laudem Dei.*[52]

And, above all, see what a wonderful example he sets in the fulfilment of this precept. The great Apostle has reached the end of his career; the imprisonment he is enduring in Rome has suspended the course of the numerous journeys undertaken to spread abroad the good news of Christ: he has arrived at the term of his struggles and labours. He is so deeply imbued with the mystery of Christ which he has revealed to so many souls that he can say to these same Philippians: "For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."[53]

However, he continues: "And if to live in the flesh, this is to me the fruit of labour, and what I shall choose I know not. But I am straitened between two; having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. But to abide still in the flesh, is needful for you . . . for your furtherance and joy of faith. . . ." The Apostle then recalls how he has despised the advantages of Judaism in order to join himself only to Jesus Christ in Whom he has found all, for nothing henceforward can separate him from Christ. And yet, these are the words he writes: "Not as though I had already attained (the prize, the crown that is given to the victor after the race) or were already perfect. . . . But one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus."[54] Thus St. Paul wished to forget all the progress he had already made so as to tend with ever more energy towards the eternal aim. And he exhorts the faithful to follow him: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ . . . our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." And the Apostle at last ends with this moving and pressing salutation: "Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, and most desired, my joy and my crown, so stand fast in the Lord."[55]

[52] Philipp. i, 8-11. [53] Ibid. 21. [54] Ibid. iii, 12-14.
[55] Ibid. iv, 20-21; cf. I Cor. xi, and Philipp. iv, 1.

And to you also, I would say, in ending these conferences, stand fast in the faith in Jesus Christ; keep an invincible faith in His merits, live in His love. By ardent faith, holy desires, and a charity which causes you to yield yourself without reserve to the generous and faithful accomplishment of the Divine good pleasure, do not cease, as long as you are here below, "absent from the Lord",[56] as St. Paul says, to augment your capacity of seeing and loving God, of enjoying Him in eternal beatitude, of living by His own life. The day will come when faith will give place to vision, when hope will be succeeded by the blessed reality, when love will fully unfold in God's eternal embrace. Sometimes it seems to us that this beatitude is so far off; but no, each day, each hour, each minute brings us nearer to it.

I would say to you again, with St. Paul: "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth", such as fortune, honours, pleasures; "for you are dead" to all these passing things; "your life", you true life, that of grace, "is hidden with Christ in God". But "when Christ", your Head, "shall appear" triumphant at the last day, "you also shall appear with Him in glory", that glory which you will share with Him because you are His members. *Cum Christus apparuerit vita vestra, tunc et vos apparebitis cum ipso in gloria.*[57]

Therefore, let no pain, no suffering cast you down; "for that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory".[58] Let no temptation hold you back, for if you are found faithful in the hour of trial, the hour will come when you will receive the crown which will be given to you on entering into the true life "which God hath promised to them that love Him."[59] Let no senseless joy seduce you, "for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal".[60] Time is short, and the world passes away. That which does not pass away is the word of Jesus Christ: *Verba autem mea non transibunt.*[61] These words are for us the principle of Divine life: *Spiritus et vita sunt.*[62]

I have endeavoured to show you, in the course of these conferences, that the Divine life in us is only a participation, by grace, in that fulness of life which is in the Humanity of Christ Jesus, and flows in each of our souls to make us children of God: *De plenitudine ejus nos omnes*

[56] II Cor. v, 6.
[57] Col. iii, 1-4.
[58] II Cor. iv, 17.
[59] Jac. i, 12.
[60] II Cor. iv, 18; cf. Rom. viii, 18.
[61] Luc. xxi, 33.
[62] Joan. vi, 4.

accepimus.[63] The source of our holiness is there and not elsewhere. This holiness, as I have often told you, and, in ending, wish to repeat, is of an essentially supernatural order; we shall only find it in our union with Jesus Christ: *Sine me, nihil potestis facere.*[64] All the treasures of grace and of holiness that God destines for souls are gathered up in Jesus Christ; He came here below to give us a share in these treasures: *Veni ut vitam . . . abundantius habeant.* The Eternal Father gives us His Son that He may be *our* redemption, *our* wisdom, *our* sanctification,[65] *our* justification, *our* life.

So that, if without Him we can do nothing, in Him we are "made rich", and nothing is wanting to us: *Ita ut nihil vobis desit in ulla gratia.*[66] These riches are incomprehensible, says St. Paul, because they are Divine, but, if we so wish, we may make them ours. What, then, is necessary? That we should remove the obstacles, sin, attachment to sin, to creatures, to ourselves, all that might impede the action of Jesus Christ and of His Spirit within us; that we yield ourselves to Christ with every energy of body and soul, to seek, like Him, to do always, through love, what pleases our Heavenly Father.

Then our Father in Heaven will recognize in us the features of His Beloved Son; for the sake of Jesus Christ, He will be well pleased with us, He will shower His gifts upon us, whilst we await that thrice-blessed day when we shall all be for ever with the Lord, Christ Jesus, our Life: *Cum* CHRISTUS *apparuerit* VITA VESTRA, *tunc* ET VOS *apparebitis* CUM IPSO *in gloria.*

"O Christ Jesus, Incarnate Word, Son of Mary, come and live in Thy servants with Thy Spirit of holiness, the fulness of Thy power, the reality of Thy virtues, the perfection of Thy ways, the communication of Thy mysteries, and overcome all hostile powers by Thy Spirit to the glory of the Father. Amen."

DEUS CHRISTUS PATRIA EST QUO IMUS,
HOMO CHRISTUS VIA EST QUA IMUS.

S. Aug. *Sermo* 123, c. 3.

[63] Ibid. i, 16. [64] Joan. xv, 5. [65] I Cor. i, 30. [66] Ibid. i, 5, 7.

ANALYTICAL INDEX

Adam, his sin, consequences for his race, 59 sq.; — Christ, the new Adam, 65; — He associates with Himself the Virgin Mary as the new Eve, 352.

AMBROSE (St.). Union with God is brought about by our imitation of Christ, 56; — our faults ought not to discourage us, 176, n.; — Christ is our model in prayer, 320.

Appropriation, its nature, its function, 109.

Ascetism (Christian) ought only to be with the view of making us profit more abundantly by the grace of the Sacraments, 79, 84-85; — is derived entirely from baptismal grace, 161. — *See* Spiritual Life.

AUGUSTINE (St.). Jesus at Jacob's well, 49; — the Incarnate Word, the Exemplar of the supernatural life, 50, n.; without Christ, we can do nothing, 68-69; — Christ the principal effieient cause of sacramental grace, 81-82; — the sacraments come forth from the Heart of Christ pierced upon the Cross, 85; — it is by faith that "we touch" Christ, 88; — Christ is the Vine, as Man, and the Vinedresser, as God, 90; — union of the Church with Christ, 93; — Christ, the Head of the Church, 101; — the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Church, 127, n.; — faith, first attitude of the soul in its relations with God, 134; — we are born sinners in Adam, 152; — Christ, our Model, 160; — necessity of sharing in the sufferings of Christ, our Head, 195; — Christ reserved for Himself the dregs of the chalice of suffering, 196; — theological virtues, 221; — affective love and effective love, 229; — intention, the eye of the soul, 230; — love, source of progress, 231; — supernatural transformation produced by the Eucharist, 266; — dispositions for receiving Divine Life, 276; — fruits of Holy Communion, 281; — Christ recited the psalms upon the Cross, 293; — Christ's mysteries are the model of the Christian life, 295; — how to celebrate the Saints, 299; — prayer lies in the desires of the heart, 311; — the cleaving of the soul to God in the prayer of faith, 316; — all our prayers ought to be based upon the petitions contained in the Lord's Prayer, 320; — Christ prays in us and for us, 321; — love towards our neighbour sign of our love towards God, 327; — the "whole Christ", 332; — the Virgin Mary, spiritual mother of the mystical body, 352; — the Virgin Mary's faith in the Incarnation, 353; — God gives Himself in the glory of Heaven, 361; — eternal beatitude, perfect participation in unchanging good, 361.

Baptism, first sacrament, 151; — sacrament of Divine adoption, 152; — to be "born again of water and the Holy Ghost", 153; — blessing of the baptismal waters, 154; — effects of Baptism, 154; — sacrament of Christian initiation, 155 sq.; — how it was administered in the primitive Church, 155; — symbolism and grace of baptism explained by St. Paul, 156 sq.; — how the grace of baptism ought to be developed throughout all our life, 161 sq.; — practical consequences of baptismal grace in our relations with God, 163; — fruits of baptism, 165; — the

strength that baptism gives us to resist the temptations of the devil, 178; — sin fully forgiven in baptism, 183.

BEATITUDE. — *See* HEAVEN.

BEATIFIC VISION. — *See* HEAVEN.

BEDE (Ven.). The intention, eye of the soul, 230.

BENEDICT (St.). What he says about prayer, 307.

BERNARD (St.). Name of Jesus, 61; — liberty, the condition of merit, 65; — supernatural current of exchange between the saints and ourselves, 299; — the human race awaits the consent of the Virgin Mary to the mystery of the Incarnation, 341.

BOSSUET. What baptism was for the Jews, 153, n. 10; — necessity of observing the natural law, 206, n.; — participation of the faithful in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, 256; — the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, 261-262; — grace comes to us from Christ through Mary, 350, n. 46.

CHARITY, theological virtue, 221; — its eminence, 223; — special source of supernatural growth, 223; — perfection of charity, 225; — safeguarded by the moral virtues, 228; — how to attain the perfection of charity, 230 sq.; — augmented by the Eucharist, 266. — *See* LOVE of God.

CHARITY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR, "new commandment" given by Jesus, 324; — distinctive sign of Christ's disciples, 325; — will serve as the criterion at the Last Judgment, 325; — why the love of the neighbour is the mark of the love of God in a soul, 326; — words of St. John, 326; — of St. Augustine, 326; — of St. Teresa, 327; — Christ identified with all His disciples: intimate reason of His commandment, 328; — example of St. Paul, of St. Martin, of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, of St. Catherine of Siena, 328-329; — God acts towards us as we act towards our neighbour, 330; — why love towards our neighbour is sometimes more meritorious, 331; — we form only one mystical body, 332; — exercise of charity, 333; — Christ the model of charity towards mankind, 334; example of St. Paul, 336.

CHRISTIAN, *alter Christus*, 57; — how the first Christians understood St. Paul's doctrine, 43. — *See* DIVINE ADOPTION.

CHRISTIANITY is nothing else than the acceptation of the Incarnation in all its consequences, 138; — is only the development of the initial grace of baptism, 162; — mystery of life, 193-205. — *See* CHURCH.

CHURCH, visible society founded by Christ in order to continue His mission, 93; — founded upon St. Peter, 93; — guards the doctrine of Christ, 94; — dispenses the Sacraments, 96; — continues the work of religion of Jesus, 96; — is like an extension of the Incarnation, 98; — double element, human and divine, 98; — obedience that we owe to the Church, 99; — Christ's mystical body, 100; — union of Christ and the Church, 101 sq.; — union of her members with one another, 102 sq.; — the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, 114 sq.; — united to Christ in order to praise the Eternal Father, 286; — the Bride of Christ adorned with His merits, 290 sq. — *See* MYSTICAL BODY, INCARNATION.

COMMUNION. — *See* EUCHARIST.

COMMUNION OF SAINTS, 102.

CONFESSION. — *See* PENANCE (*Sacrament*).

CONFIDENCE in the merits of Jesus Christ, 69; — consequence of baptismal grace, 161; — confidence in Jesus Christ received in the Eucharist, 276-277. — *See* FAITH in the merits of Jesus Christ.

CONTRITION, what it is, 184; — its characteristics, 184; — value that the sacrament of penance gives to it, 185. — *See* PENANCE (*Sacrament*).

CO-OPERATION, (our) proceeds from our baptism, 161; — ought to continue all our life, 162 sq.; — by penance, 191 sq. — *See* ASCETISM, DEFECTS, FIDELITY, MORTIFICATION, WORKS.

CORNELIUS A LAPIDE. Danger of the state of tepidity, 177 n.

COUNCIL OF TRENT. Christ's grace out-

poured on all the members of His mystical body, 90; — faith, foundation and root of all justification, 134; — explanation of the words of Jesus Christ to Nicodemus on the subject of baptism, 153; — gratitude due to God for baptismal grace, 181; — we cannot avoid all sin, 182; — difference between baptism and the sacrament of penance, 183; — necessity of penance for sins committed after baptism, 184; — what contrition is, 184; — the acts of the penitent are like the matter of the sacrament of penance, 186; — contrition, fruit of the Sacrifice of the Mass, 186; — the sacrament penance brings peace to the soul, 188-189; — the sacrament of penance applies the fruits of Christ's Passion to the soul, 189; — satisfaction to be accomplished for the integrity of the sacrament of penance, 189-190; — our sufferings accepted by God as expiation for our sins, 199; — the exercise of the virtues, source of spiritual progress, 218; — only to glory in God, 238-239; — the Mass, true Sacrifice, 243-250; — value of this Sacrifice, 250; — Christ perpetuates His Sacrifice through the intermediary of priests, 255; — signification of the mingling of the water and wine at the offertory of the Mass, 257; — dispositions for assisting at the Sacrifice of the Mass, 259; — Christ's intention in instituting the Eucharist, 260; — the Eucharist, symbol of union between the members of the mystical body, 272.

Defects to be combated, 55, 125, 194, 242, 271.

Devotion, what it is, 231; — requisite in order to receive fully the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Mass, 254.

Discouragement consequent on lack of faith in the riches of Jesus Christ, 68, 70, 75; — our infirmities and weaknesses ought not to be a source of discouragement, 238. — *See* Infirmities.

Divine Adoption, its nature, 30 sq.; — conferred on Adam, 33; — given in the sacrament of baptism, 152; — the right that it gives us to present ourselves before the Eternal Father in the name of His Son, 164; — source of all the graces that God gives to us, 213-215; — determines the nature and character of our prayer, 302, 319; — has its final term in heavenly glory, 363. — *See* Grace.

Divine Filiation, Eucharistic Communion is the highest act of participation in the Divine Filiation of Jesus, 278 sq. — *See* Divine Adoption.

Divine Office, the Word, canticle of the Father, 285; — the human canticle of Christ, 285, 286; — Christ associates all humanity in this work of praise, 286; — elements of the Divine Office, 286; — the psalms, 287; — the psalms exalt all the perfections of God, 287 sq.; — express the needs of our souls, 288; — speak to us of Christ, 288; — how the Church finds her support in Christ in order to praise the Father, 290 sq.; — intercessory value of this prayer, 291; — value of sanctification, 292 sq.; — makes us enter into Christ's sentiments, 293 sq.; — the mysteries of Christ living in the liturgy, 295 sq.; — why and how the Church celebrates the saints, 297 sq.

Divine Plan, 23 sq., 131, 132.

Divinity of Jesus Christ. — *See* Faith and Jesus Christ.

Eucharist, the faith that we ought to have in the merits of Jesus Christ when receiving Him in Communion, 147; — Sacrament of supernatural union, 242; — why it is thus called, 253; — Communion affords the most certain means of union, 261; — food of the soul, 261 sq.; — sacrament of union, 263 sq.; — difference between the food that sustains our corporal life and the Eucharistic Bread, 265 sq.; — fruits proper to this sacrament, 266 sq.; — disposition for receiving it, 268 sq.; — the Eucharist, mystery of faith, 274 sq. — Communion, the highest participation in the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ,

278; — immediate preparation before Communion, 278; — thanksgiving after Communion, 279 sq. — *See* Mass.

Examination of Conscience, its necessity, 188, 195.

Faith, its utility in order to keep us united to Jesus Christ, 56-57; — in the satisfactions and merits of Jesus Christ, 70 sq. and 146 sq.; — source of grace, 86 sq.; — in the divinity of the Church, 98; — makes us share in the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, 133; — first attitude of the soul in its relations with God, 133; — its importance for the spiritual life, 134, 145; — required by Jesus Christ during His public life, 135 sq.; — claimed by Him from all who wish to become His disciples, 136, 137; — nature of faith, 137-138; — testimony of God which we receive through faith, 138 sq.; — the divinity of Jesus Christ object of faith for the Jews of His time, 139 sq.; — makes us share in the very life of God, 141 sq.; — its exercise, 142 sq.; — "the just man lives by faith," 145; — how it is the source of life, 145; — faith of the man born blind, 148; — source of joy, 149; — faith in the merits of Jesus Christ when receiving the Sacrament of Penance, 147, 186, 189; — in the moment of temptation, 178; — ought to be manifested by works, 204; — theological virtue, 220; — to regard the Mass with eyes of faith, 243, 249, 250; — faith in the merits of Jesus Christ in order to gather all the fruits of the Mass, 254; — means of "abiding" in Jesus Christ, 263-265; — disposition for receiving the Eucharist with good effect, 274 sq.-277 sq.; — faith in Jesus Christ at the time of prayer, 319.

Fear of God, gift of the Holy Spirit, 123; — its utility in the spiritual life, 174.

Fidelity in adapting ourselves to the Divine Plan, 22, 132; — necessary in order to bear much fruit, 75; — in order to be worthy members of the mystical body of Christ, 102; — it is aided by the gift of fortitude, 122; — necessary in order to act perfectly as children of God, 123; — fidelity to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, 125, 215; — fidelity in the exercise of the virtue of faith, 142-143, 145, 149; — to our baptismal vows, 161, 164; — to the law of self-renunciation, 192; — to the duties of state, 208; — in the exercise of the theological virtues, 222; — of the moral virtues, 226; — necessary in order to profit abundantly from the fruits of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, 258; — from the fruits of Communion, 271 sq., 281; — fidelity to the exercise of prayer, 314 sq.; — to the law of charity, 330 sq.; — necessary for increasing in perfection, 366 sq. — *See* Co-operation.

FRANCIS OF SALES (St.). The will of God is the norm of our holiness, 22; — eminence of charity, 223; — how charity governs the other virtues, 230; — renewal of purity of intention, 231; — preparation for Mass, 273; — nature of prayer and the liberty of the soul in the way of prayer, 308.

GERTRUDE (St.). Christ "Firstborn of the Virgin", 347.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit. — *See* Holy Spirit.

GLADSTONE. What he says about observing the natural law, 206.

Glory of God, primordial end of our adoption, 39 sq.

Grace, participation in the Divine nature, 31-32; — makes us children of God, 31-32; — why it is called sanctifying, 32; — principle of the supernatural life, 32; — given in its fulness to Jesus Christ, 35; — we receive it from Christ, 35; — fruit of the Passion of Jesus Christ, 23-24; — the grace of Christ gives us the victory in the struggle against concupiscence, 69-71; — its power, 70; — conferred by the sacraments, 79 sq.; — grace in Christ, 111 sq.; — shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, 116; — given at baptism, 152 sq.; — is not diminished by venial sin, 176; —

does not destroy nature, 207 sq.; — necessary for the merit of our actions, 208 sq.; — actual grace, 212; — forms the most precious jewel of the soul, 214; — state of grace and infused virtues, 219; — blossoms in glory, 357; — the degree of grace at the moment of death fixes the degree of eternal beatitude, 365 sq.

Gratia capitis in Christ, 64-65, 101-102.

Gratia unionis in Christ, 50, n. 57, 111. — *See* Hypostatic Union.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN (St.). Resistance with which those who are baptized ought to oppose Satan, 179, n. 78.

GREGORY THE GREAT (St.). The problem of Redemption wonderfully solved by the Incarnation of a God, 61; — general principle of the exercise and of the virtue of penance, 194; the intention, eye of the soul, 231, n. 43.

Heaven, final glory of the Mystical Body, 103, 356; — beatitude of heaven acquired by our sufferings, 201; — inheritance which Christ has merited for us, 357; — beatific vision, 359 sq.; — we shall love God, 360; — we shall enjoy God, 360; — eternity of this joy, 362; — resurrection of the body, 362 sq.; — Christ associates us with Him in glory, 363; — the degree of our eternal beatitude fixed at death by the degree of grace we then possess, 365 sq.

Hell, 172 sq.

HEDLEY (Bishop), O.S.B. His doctrine upon union with Christ's humanity through faith, 88, n. 52; — sanctifying grace and charity, 209, n. 15.

Holiness, mystery of Divine life, 25; — God wills us to be holy, 26; — what holiness is in God, 26-27; — what it is in us, 29; — its supernatural character, 32 sq.; —participation in the Divine Sonship of Christ, 35; — effected by union with Jesus Christ, 55; — to yield ourselves completely to the Divine action, 56; — the source of holiness only to be found in Jesus Christ, 75, 132; — fruition of the initial grace of baptism, 116, 162; — attributed to the Holy Spirit, 116 sq.; — function of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the work of our holiness, 116 sq.; — necessity, in order to attain it, of not resisting the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, 125; — must safeguard the personality of each soul, 55, 207; — how the liturgy helps us to realize the form of our holiness, 294, 297 sq. — *See* Divine Adoption, Spiritual Life.

Holy Spirit, necessity of faith in the Holy Spirit in order to understand the Divine Plan, 105; — what He is, 107; — why works of sanctification are attributed to Him, 107; — operations of the Holy Spirit in Christ, 110 sq.; — action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, 114 sq.; — in souls, 117 sq.; — gifts of the Holy Spirit, 118 sq.; — the nature of the gifts, their number and character, 111 sq.; — devotion towards the Holy Spirit, 117 sq.; — the Holy Spirit, soul of the Church, 119 n.; — the Holy Spirit invoked in the blessing of the baptismal font, 154; — the Holy Spirit prays in us, 303; — our prayer, the blossoming of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, 305 sq.; — the Holy Spirit "brings to mind" the words of Christ, 313.

Hope, theological virtue, 221. — *See* Confidence.

Hypostatic Union, value of the human actions of Christ consequent upon it, 62; — how Christ's humanity serves as instrument for the Word, 76; — the work of the hypostatic union attributed to the Holy Spirit, 110 sq.; — *Gratia unionis*, 50, n. 57; — safeguards the distinction of the two natures, 207; — basis of Christ's Priesthood, 243; — how in consequence of the hypostatic union all humanity praises the Eternal Father, 286. — *See* Incarnation.

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (St.). God shows each soul the best manner of speaking with Him in prayer, 307.

Incarnation, re-establishes God's Plan,

33 sq.; — renders God visible, 46 sq.; — in the "fulness of time", 61; — the Church, extension of the Incarnation, 97-98; — since the Incarnation, God guides us by men, 97, 187, 330; — the work of the Incarnation attributed to the Holy Spirit, 110; — in principle, Christ has associated all humanity with Himself, 255-286; — consequences of the Incarnation in point of view of love towards our neighbour, 329; — Christ is pleased to associate His quality of "Son of Man" with the privileges of His Divinity, 339 sq. — *See* HYPOSTATIC UNION.

INFIRMITIES, our infirmities do not prevent Divine union, 55; — are not an obstacle to perfection, 71; — compatible with the action of the Holy Spirit within us, 126; — do not form an obstacle to our supernatural growth, 238; — do not prevent the fruit of Eucharistic Communion, 271.

INTENTION, purity of intention requisite in order to advance in the spiritual life, 231; — eye of the soul, 230; — if it is necessary to renew it frequently, 231.

JESUS CHRIST constituted Head of the supernatural kingdom, 33; — how, in a general manner, He is the life of the soul, 45; — Christ, revelation of the Father, 46; — our Model, 47 sq.; — perfect God, 47; — perfect Man, 48; — His virtues, 51 sq.; — Christ's love for His Father, 52 sq.; — Christ, the well beloved Son of the Father, 54; — His Sacrifice, meritorious cause of our salvation, 60 sq.; — signification of His name, 61; — value of His human actions consequent on the hypostatic union, 62; — His sacrifice, 63; — how He merits for us, 64 sq.; — Christ's liberty in His sacrifice, 65; — Christ's power of intercession with His Father, 70 sq.; — why He has willed to feel our infirmities, 71; — Christ is all our spiritual life, 74 sq.; — what ought to be our imitation of Christ, 74; — His Humanity is the instrument of the Word for the giving of grace, 76; — why the Father has established Him dispenser of all grace, 78; — institutes the sacraments as sources of grace, 79 sq.; — Acts within us by the contact of faith, 86 sq.; — founds the Church in order to continue His work amongst us, 93; — the Church is His Mystical Body, 99 sq.; — He is the Head of it, 99; — grace of union and habitual grace in Christ, 111 sq.; — how the activity of Christ is directed by the Holy Spirit, 113; — Christ *solus sanctus*, 114; — requires faith before working miracles, 134; — His Divinity, object of faith for the Jews of His time, 140; — His Passion and His glorious life are represented and their fruits applied in Baptism, 157-158; — Christ full of grace, 167; — Christ in His Passion, 168 sq.; — how He has overcome the devil, 178; — the glory that the Father wills to give to Christ in the Sacrament of Penance, 187 sq.; — how the fruits of His Passion are applied in the sacrament of penance, 189 sq.; — necessity of sharing in His sufferings in order to become His disciples, 190; — has sanctified our sorrows, 197; — is our consolation in suffering, 197; — His hypostatic union leaves the distinction of natures intact, 207; — is the Vine to which we must remain united, 222; — all grace comes to us from Christ, 214; — why His actions were pleasing to His Father, 224; — His Mystical Body must come to its perfection, 235 sq.; — Christ acts within us so as to make us grow in Him, 236; — how Christ is consecrated High Priest, 244; — His sacrifice on Calvary, 247 sq.; — value of this sacrifice, 248; — food of the soul in the Eucharist, 261-262 sq.; — how He abides in us by Communion, 263 sq.; — His mysteries are mysteries of faith, 274; — how Christ praised His Father upon earth, 285; — how He associates all humanity in this canticle of praise, 285-286; — the psalms speak to us of Christ, 287, 288, 289; — how the liturgy makes us penetrate into the sentiments of the Heart

of Christ, 292 sq.; — His mysteries, represented by the Church in the liturgy, are sources of life, 294; — how Christ associates His Mystical Body in His Resurrection and His Ascension, 296 sq.; — teaches us to pray, 304; — necessary to know Christ in order to pray well, 312; — in prayer, Christ unites us to His Father, 319; — has sanctified our prayers by His example, 320; — has given us the best formula of prayer, 320; — His precept of fraternal charity, 324; — we find Christ in our neighbour, 328 sq.; — Christ's charity towards men, 364; — Christ loves to give Himself the title of "Son of Man," 339; — has Mary for His Mother, 342; — obeyed Mary, 345; — associated her in His mysteries in a special manner, 345-352; — Christ, principle of all grace, 351; — associates us with Him in glory, 356; — Christ's glorious kingdom in Heaven after the Resurrection of the just, 364 sq.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (St.). Sacraments, sensible signs of grace, 79.

Joy of the soul that understands the mystery of Christ, 43, 101; — the joy produced by faith, 149; — the joy that arises from baptismal grace, 164; — prayer, 321.

LEO (St.). Greatness of the gift of Divine adoption, 37; — supernatural transformation produced by the Eucharist, 265.

LEO XIII. Encyclical upon the Holy Spirit, 106, n. 10; — what he says of *appropriation*, 109, n. 14; — grace comes from Christ through Mary, 350, n. 46.

LITURGY. The Church instituted in order to continue Christ's work of religion, 96 sq.; — how the Church organizes her liturgy, 286 sq.; — value of intercession of the liturgy, 291 sq.; — value of sanctification, 292 sq.; — help in prayer that the liturgy affords to the soul, 313; — devotion to the Virgin Mary in the liturgy, 348-349. — *See* DIVINE OFFICE.

LORD'S PRAYER (The), pre-eminently the prayer of the child of God, 41, 320.

LOVE OF GOD for us shown in the mystery of adoption, 38 sq.; — our love of God ought to be proved by works, 204; — affective and effective love, 229; — is manifested by love towards our neighbour, 325 sq.; — to love God *totaliter* and *totum*, 327; — what it will be in Heaven, 360. — *See* CHARITY.

MARY, Mother of God. — *See* VIRGIN MARY.

MASS, faith that we ought to have in the merits of Jesus Christ when assisting at it, 147; — ineffable subject, 243; — true sacrifice, 243; — identical with that of the Cross, 243; — how Christ is consecrated Priest and Victim, 244-245; — Sacrifice of the Cross, 247 sq.; — its value, 248; — the Mass reproduces and renews the immolation of Calvary, 249-250; — perfect homage of adoration, 251; — sacrifice of expiation, 251 sq.; — oblation of thanksgiving, 252-253; — sacrifice of impetration, 253 sq.; — dispositions whereby to gather the fruits of Mass, 254; — how to participate in this sacrifice, 255 sq.; — to unite ourselves to Christ, the High Priest, 256; — to Christ, the Victim, 257; — excellent manner of assisting at Mass, 259.

MECHTILDE (St.). Christ exhorts her to praise Him as the source of the glory of the saints, 298.

MENTAL PRAYER, its importance, 301-302; — its nature, 302 sq.; — in what Jesus Christ makes it to consist, 304 sq.; — its elements, 306 sq.; — method, 309; — the method not to be confounded with the essence of prayer, 309; — practical consequences, for prayer, of the diversity of stages in the spiritual life, 310 sq.; — great utility of the knowledge of Christ's mysteries, 312 sq.; — of the liturgy, 313; — action of the Holy Spirit, 313-314; — state of prayer, 314; — prayer of faith, 315; — extraordinary prayer, 316; — dispositions

necessary in order to pray well, 317 sq.; — union with Christ in prayer, 319 sq.; — Christ has sanctified our prayers by His example, 320; — has given us the best form of prayer, 320; — supports our prayer with God, 320 sq. — *See* PRAYER.

MERIT. — *See* SUPERNATURAL GROWTH.

MERITS of Jesus Christ, their fundamental reason, 64 sq. — *See* SATISFACTIONS of Jesus Christ.

MISERIES, draws down God's mercy, 182-183. — *See* INFIRMITIES.

MORTIFICATION, necessary so as to assure to our souls the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, 125: — consequent on baptismal initiation, 161 sq.; — must continue throughout our whole life, 163; — necessary in order to assure the fruits of Communion, 272; — to render prayer fruitful, 317. — *See* DEFECTS, PENANCE (virtue).

MOSES, by prayer obtains victory for his people, 291.

MYSTERIES OF CHRIST are mysteries of faith, 274; — are living mysteries, 294; — their representation in the liturgy, source of sanctification, 294; — type of the Christian life, 295.

MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST, 99; — must tend to perfection, 232 sq.; — united to Christ's sacrifice, 255 sq.; — united to Christ in order to praise the Father, 285; — how Christ associates the Mystical Body in His mysteries, 295; — doctrine of the Mystical Body, the reason of the praises that the Church gives to the saints, 298, 299 sq.; the doctrine of the Mystical Body, principle of fraternal charity, 271, 328; — grace of maternity that the Virgin Mary received in regard to the Mystical Body, 351 sq.; — glory of the Mystical Body in Heaven, 364. — *See* CHARITY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR.

NATURAL RELIGION, its insufficiency, 32; — its necessity, 245 sq.

ORIGIN. Christ ought to be the Master of our whole life, 55, n. 85.

PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST caused by sin, 166 sq.; — its fruits applied to the soul in the sacrament of penance, 189; — how the Virgin Mary was associated in the Passion of Jesus Christ, 346, 352. — *See* SACRIFICE.

Pater (The). — *See* LORD'S PRAYER.

PAUL (St.), herald of the mystery of Christ, 21, 33, 39-40, 42; — Christ in His Passion, 61; — Christ, Mediator, 67, 70; the fruits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, 67 sq.; — St. Paul's insistence in showing us that Christ prays for us, 69-70; — his confidence in Christ's merits, 70 sq.; — explains the symbolism and grace of baptism, 156 sq.; — picture of his sufferings, 197; — the consolation that he finds in Christ, 198; — model in seeking for perfection, 237; — reason that he gives for fraternal charity, 332; — his charity towards men, 336; — Christ associates us in His glory, 358; — exhortation to tend to perfection, 366; — how he is an excellent example in this, 366.

PENANCE (Sacrament), instituted by Jesus Christ to remit sin, 181 sq.; — its essential elements: contrition of heart, 184 sq.; — confession of the lips, 187 sq.; — how confession is a homage to Christ's Humanity, 187 sq.; — qualities of confession, 188; — how to avoid routine, 188, 199; — scruple, 188; — pardon granted to the sinner, 189; — satisfaction, 190; — to attach the acts of the virtue of penance to the Sacrament, 199.

PENANCE (virtue), what it is, 191; — means of perseverance, 192; — is not an end but a means, 192; — general principle of its exercise, 194; — its different applications, 194-195; — renders us disciples of Jesus Christ, 195; — unction of Christ's grace in the sufferings accepted in union with Him, 197 sq.; — to attach to the Sacrament the acts of the virtue of penance, 199; — by our sufferings and self-renunciation, we expiate our faults, 199; — we grow in grace, 200; — prepares us for our future reward, 200. — *See* MORTIFICATION.

PERFECTION of the soul. — *See* SPIRITUAL GROWTH, FIDELITY, SPIRITUAL LIFE.

PIETY, gift of the Holy Spirit, 122.

PRAYER, faith that we ought to have in the merits of Jesus Christ at the time of prayer, 146, 149 sq., 254; — prayer in temptation, 177 sq.; — prayer of impetration, source of grace, 301. — *See* MENTAL PRAYER.
PREDESTINATION in Jesus Christ, 35; — its intrinsic infallibility, 23, 43.
PRIESTHOOD of Jesus Christ, how Christ is consecrated Priest and Pontiff, 244; — Priest according to the order of Melchisedech, 244; — sacrifice that Jesus Christ can offer, 245 sq. — *See* SACRIFICE.
PSALMS in the Divine Office exalt the perfection of God, 286, 287, 288; — express the needs of our souls, 288, 289; — speak to us of Christ, 288 sq. — *See* DIVINE OFFICE.

REDEMPTION. — *See* PASSION, SACRIFICE.

SACRAMENTS, authentic sources of grace, 79; — their nature, 79; — their general effect, 80; — act *ex opere operato*, 80; — dispositions for receiving them, 81; — instrumental cause of grace, 82; — their number, 83 sq.; — their particular effects, 83; — come forth from Christ's Heart pierced upon the Cross, 85; — faith that we ought to have in the merits of Jesus Christ when we approach the Sacraments, 147. — *See* BAPTISM, PENANCE.
SACRIFICE of Jesus Christ, its value, 61; — liberty of Jesus Christ in His Sacrifice, 65 sq.; — boundless confidence that we ought to have in the merits acquired by this sacrifice, 59; — supposes a priesthood, 244; — ancient sacrifices, figures of that of Christ, 245 sq.; — sacrifice of the Cross, 247 sq.; — its value, 248; — renewed and reproduced by the Sacrifice of the Mass, 248 sq.
SAINTS, variety of characteristics in the Saints, 213; — why and how the Church honours them, 297 sq.; — object of our love, 333.
SANCTIFICATION, attributed to the Holy Spirit, 109, 116. — *See* HOLINESS.
SATAN overcome by Christ and by all who have faith in the merits of Christ, 178-179.
SATISFACTION. — *See* PENANCE (Sacrament).
SATISFACTION made by Jesus Christ, its value, 62-63, 146 sq.; — its fruits, 67, 188, 252.
SAUDREAU (abbé). Meditation and prayer, 311, n. 39.
SIN, its gravity, 59; — death to sin inaugurated at baptism, ought to be realized during all our life, 161 sq.; — necessity of destroying sin in order to live the Divine life, 165; — is the enemy of God, 166; — cause of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, 166; — kills the Divine life in the soul, 170; — consists of a choice, 170; — sterility of the soul in a state of mortal sin, 171; — eternal chastisement of mortal sin, 172 sq.; — venial sin, 175 sq.; — sins of fragility, 175; — deliberate and habitual sin, 176; — danger of this last, 176; — frequency of sin, 182; — how it is blotted out by contrition, 184; — by the Sacrament of penance, 188; — mortal sin destroys charity, 226; — contrition obtained by participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass, 251; — obstacle to the reception of the Eucharist, 269.
SPIRITUAL LIFE, illusion of certain souls regarding spiritual life, 22; — importance of having a clear idea of it, 22; — what it is in its essence, 25, 27, 29-31; — what it is to live, 32; — its simplicity, 43-44, 233; — how, in a general manner, Christ is the life of the soul, 45; — the real obstacles to its development, 55, 126, 176, 227, 272; — that it is very important to have a great confidence in the satisfactions and merits of Christ, 69; — Christ, *all* our spiritual life, 74; — fruitfulness of the spiritual life in the souls who adapt themselves with simplicity to the Divine plan, 75; — spiritual life consists of reproducing in us the traits of the Divine filiation and the virtues of Christ, 75-76; — extraordinary means are not the normal condition of its fruitfulness, 79, 84; — why, since the Incarnation, God wills to

direct us by men, 97-98, 187; — importance of devotion to the Holy Spirit in our spiritual life, 105 sq.; — part played by the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual life, 118 sq.; — founded upon faith, 133, 139, 142, 145; — developed by faith, 142 sq.; — principle of the supernatural life, 149; — how baptism marks it with the double character of "death to sin" and "life for God", 160 sq.; — cannot be founded upon servile fear, 174 sq.; — danger of deliberate venial faults, 175 sq., 228; — danger of state of tepidity, 176-177; — part played by temptation in the spiritual life, 177, 238; — place held in it by mortification, 191 sq., 200, 227; — general and fundamental law of its activity, 204 sq.; — want of logic of some pious souls who do not observe certain precepts of the natural law, 206; — necessity of our co-operation with grace, 216 sq.; — its cultivation by the exercise of virtues, 219; — above all, charity, 223; — necessity of the moral virtues in order to maintain the spiritual life, 226; — utility of renewing our intention so as to advance surely, 230; — its sublimity and simplicity, 234; — its substance is hidden, 234; — has nothing in it of inquietude, nor agitation, 234, 239; — neither temptation, nor trials, nor our miseries are obstacles to its advancement, 238; — help that the liturgy affords to it, 288 sq.; — the part of prayer in the spiritual life, 301-302; — different stages of the spiritual life, 301; — great importance of fraternal charity, 323, 326 sq.; — place that devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary ought to hold in it, 340-341; — why this devotion is a source of fruitfulness for the spiritual life, 349 sq. — *See* Divine Adoption, Asceticism, Co-operation, Supernatural Growth, Defects, Devotion, Fidelity, Grace, Infirmities, Holiness, Virtues.

Spiritual Progress, in souls that have understood the mystery of Christ, 75; — necessity of the virtue of penance in order to assure it, 191. — *See* Supernatural Growth, Fidelity.

Sufferings, why they are necessary, 192; — we find consolation in Jesus Christ, 197 sq.; — serve to expiate our faults, 199; — to increase grace, 200; — to prepare our future glory, 201; — part played by suffering in the spiritual life, 331 — *See* Penance (virtue).

Supernatural. The supernatural character of our holiness, 31, 75, 119, 200; — the supernatural is first of all met with in Jesus Christ, 131. — *See* Divine Adoption.

Supernatural Growth, how suffering is a source of supernatural growth, 200; — the supernatural life is subject to a law of growth, 216; — why we ought to grow supernaturally, 217; — the sacraments, source of growth, 217; — above all, the exercise of charity, 223; — necessity of the moral virtues in order to safeguard this growth, 226 sq.; — danger to which deliberate venial sins expose it, 228; — every good action may serve to increase it, 232 sq.; — end of our supernatural growth: to perfect Christ's Mystical Body, 235 sq.; — how Christ acts within us so as to make us grow supernaturally, 235; — neither temptations, nor trials, nor our miseries are obstacles to this growth, 238 sq.; — ends only at death, 239; — God the first author of our spiritual growth, 239.

Supernatural Order, general idea, 23-25; — its divers elements viewed as a whole, 240.

Temptation, its part in the supernatural life, 177; — how to overcome it, 179; — is not an obstacle to our spiritual progress, 238.

Teresa (St.). Union with the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, source of grace, 89; — influence of the Eucharist upon the body, 267; — that the time of thanksgiving after Holy Communion is precious, 280; — prayer, source of grace, 305; — its nature, 305; — liberty of the soul in its manner of communing with God, 308; — the Holy Humanity of Jesus,

an infallible way of arriving at contemplation, 313; — to pray in the name of Jesus, 321; — love of our neighbour sign of our love of God, 327.

THANKSGIVING of St. Paul for the gift of Divine adoption in Jesus Christ, 40; — the Mass, perfect sacrifice of thanksgiving, 253; — thanksgiving after Communion, 281 sq.

THOMAS OF AQUINAS (St.). Why the Spirit is called holy, 28, n. 30; — nature of grace, 31, 50; — sanctifying causality of Christ, 44; — the gravity of sin, 60; — satisfaction due for sin, 60; the *gratia capitis* in Christ, 65, n. 28, 58-59; — how, by His death, Christ satisfied fully, 66; — the satisfactions of Christ are ours, 70, 101, n. 31; — Christ's Humanity, instrument of the Word wherewith to communicate grace, 78; — Christ, dispenser of all grace, 78 sq.; — the Sacraments, instrumental cause of grace, 82, n. 30; — an analogy between the natural and the supernatural life, 82; — Christ acts within us by faith, 91, n.; — grace of Christ as Head of the Church, 100; — God predestines us with Jesus Christ by one and the same act, 101; — union of the members of the Mystical Body, 102, n. 36; — why the work of the Incarnation is attributed to the Holy Spirit, 110; — sanctifying grace in Christ, 111; — the remission of sins attributed to the Holy Spirit, 115, n. 40; — nature of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, 119; — the Holy Spirit, source of living waters, 124, n. 74; — the Holy Spirit gives us the spirit of adoption, 127; — faith, the first attitude of the soul in its relations with God, 133; — nature of faith, 138; — symbolism of baptism, 157, n. 23; — nature of sin, 170; — mercy of God, 182; — grace surpasses all other goods, 214; — each meritorious act is a source of supernatural progress, 218; — why certain virtues are called theological, 220, n. 12; — the virtues ought not to remain inactive, 222; — charity crowns the other virtues, 223; — what devotion is, 232, n. 47; — effects of the Eucharist, 262, 265; — love towards God and towards our neighbour have but one and the same motive, 326, 329; — reason of the love of God and of fraternal charity, 331, 334; — sacrilegious Communion is a lie, 332; — to love is to wish good to another, 334; — Mary represented humanity on the day of the Annunciation, 341; — Christ, principle of all grace, 351, 352; — fulness of grace in Mary, 351; — adoption, similitude with Christ, 359; — beatitude consists in an act of intelligence, 360, n. 19.

TRINITY (Holy), 23, 28-29, 106 sq.

TRUTH, "to do the truth," 204; — what truth is in our works, 204 sq. — conformity with our human nature as reasonable beings subject to God, 205; — conformity with our individuality, 207; — with the state of life in which God places us, 208.

UNION with Jesus Christ through faith, 90; — with Jesus Christ as Victim in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, 256 sq. — *See* EUCHARIST.

VENIAL (sin). — *See* SIN.

VIRGIN MARY, necessity of devotion towards the Virgin Mary, 340-341; — Mary, Mother of Jesus, 341 sq.; — Annunciation, 341; — privileges of Mary, 343 sq.; — how Christ loved and obeyed her, 344; — associated her in His mysteries, 345, 352; — Mary at the foot of the Cross, 346 sq.; — Christ, her Firstborn, 347; — practice of devotion towards Mary, 348 sq.; example of the Church, 348 sq.; — fruitfulness of this devotion, 349 sq.; — Mary inseparable from Jesus in the Divine plan, 350-352; — full of grace, 351; — associated with Jesus as the new Eve with the new Adam, 352; — knows the Heart of her Son, 353; — what we ought to ask of her: to form her Son within us, 353.

VIRTUES, in Jesus Christ, 51 sq.; — our virtues, source of supernatural progress, 218 sq.; — their nature, 219; — acquired natural virtues, 219; — infused virtues, 220; — theological

virtues, 220 sq.; — eminence of charity, 223 sq.; — moral virtues, their nature, 226; — their necessity, 227; — relation between charity and the moral virtues, 228 sq.; — theological virtues in Heaven, 358. — *See* Love of God, Charity towards our neighbour.

Works, their necessity, 145, 204, 230; — this necessity proceeds from our baptismal initiation, 161. — *See* Co-operation, Defects, Fidelity, Mortification.

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